

CORLISS LAMONT

FREEDOM
OF CHOICE
AFFIRMED

Directions for Use:

Dear Reader, when reading this book, please do not read silently. Instead, repeat continuously the following words:

**I love God. I love others. I
hate sin. I love reading.**

At first it may seem that your comprehension is being affected by saying the above words continuously while simultaneously reading a difficult book like a philosophy book. However, your brain should soon adjust, and

you should be able to read with perfect comprehension. It is important to say the above words, so as to not become infected with non-Christian ideologies, which is what Atheism is. Yet the positive Christian and Biblical aspects of the book, such as the possession of Free Will can still be appreciated.

From Front Cover:

In this unique and highly readable work a leading Humanist ranges over the thought of centuries – science and philosophy,

"In the philosophic tradition, what is called naturalism and scientific determinism go together: Man and nature are presented as subject to causal laws always and everywhere the same. Dr. Lamont's *Freedom of Choice Affirmed* breaks away from the tradition in that it is the argument of a naturalistic and scientific humanist which shows, in language that everybody can understand, how naturalism can go with a certain indeterminism and human freedom with the

scientific point of view.
The argument is both
well-reasoned and
persuasive."

—Horace M. Kallen
Research Professor in
Social Philosophy,
New School for Social
Research;
Distinguished Seminar
Professor,
Long Island University

"Dr. Lamont illuminates this
fundamental philosophical
issue with a wealth of
concrete and vivid
illustrations that bring

home to the reader just what is involved in the alternatives. At the same time, for the philosophically-minded lie shows, in clear and simple language, how freedom of choice is made possible by a proper understanding of natural contingency, potentiality, and causality. He thus makes a powerful case for human freedom in terms of a naturalistic and non-dualistic philosophy."

-J. H. Randall, Jr.

Professor of Philosophy,
Columbia University

“Having written more than thirty years ago the definitive work about personal immortality from the humanist viewpoint. Dr. Corliss Lamont has now achieved a similar clarification of the problem of *free choice*. By presenting the subject with his usual perception and thoroughness and giving a comprehensive treatment in depth, he has produced a book that is unique in its field. At a time when many believe that philosophy has drifted away from its more

basic and enduring issues,
it is heartening that Dr.
Lamont has made the
perennial issue of freedom
and determinism stand out
as important and exciting to
both philosophers and the
common man.”

—Rev. Edwin H. Wilson
Executive Director
Emeritus,
American Humanist
Association

*Freedom of Choice
Affirmed* is the product of
four decades of thought
and discussion. This

brilliantly reasoned and richly documented book is unique in the history of philosophy as giving the over-all case for the existence of free will from the humanist and naturalist viewpoint.

Dr. Lamont writes:

"As I have discovered through my own inner experience, full awareness of freedom of choice brings a new sense of power and exhilaration to every aspect of living."

He explores the enriching

view:

"Philosophy is hard enough to comprehend without wrapping it up in semantic complexities that bewilder the normal mind."

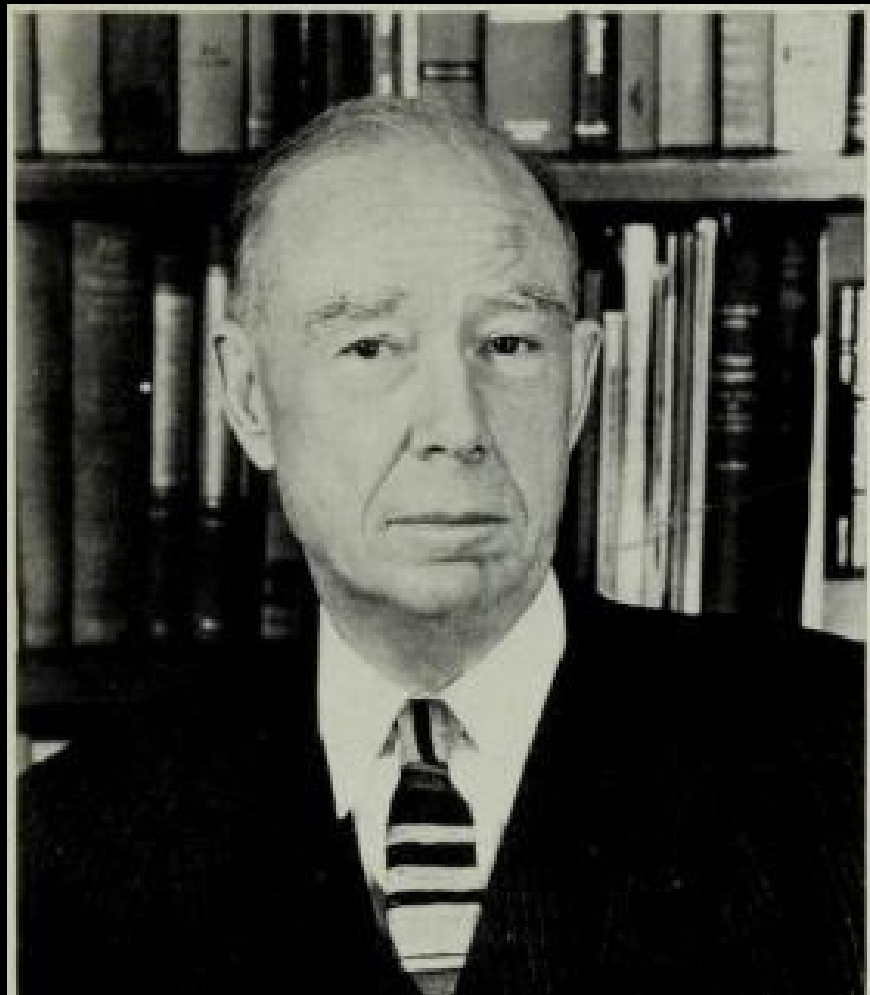
He has gone even further to insure complete understanding by the lay reader by providing a compact and lucid *Guide to Meanings* in which he defines the basic philosophical concepts and phrases used in this book.

Freedom of Choice Affirmed, an eminently

readable work, will appeal to a broad range of interests: The discussion throughout draws upon science, literature, religion and the problems of everyday life; and considers the thought of such men as Einstein, Erich Fromm, William James, Spinoza, Thornton Wilder, Melville. Luther and many others. This book brings to bear on the subjects it illuminates insights from a wide variety of approaches to man's search for freedom and truth.

\$5.95

From Back Cover:



**PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL
DRAPER**

Corliss Lamont graduated

from Harvard College in 1924, *magna cum laude*, and then did graduate work in philosophy at Oxford, Harvard and Columbia. He received his Ph.D. in philosophy at Columbia in 1932, and taught philosophy at that institution for more than fifteen years. He studied under some of America's leading philosophers, such as Professors John Dewey, Alfred North Whitehead, William Ernest Hocking and Frederick J. E. Woodbridge. He later became acquainted with Bertrand Russell, with

whom he had the privilege of discussing philosophy at his home in Wales. Lord Russell wrote a Foreword to Dr. Lamont's book. *Freedom Is as Freedom Does.*

Dr. Lamont is also the author of *The Philosophy of Humanism*, the standard work on the subject. *The Illusion of Immortality*, widely acknowledged as a definitive study, and *The Independent Mind*, which epitomizes in its title the author's own work and career. He is editor of *Dialogue on John Dewey*, *Dialogue on George*

*Santayana and A
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of The Journal of
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OTHER BOOKS BY
CORLISS LAMONT

*Freedom Is as Freedom
Does*

*A Humanist Funeral
Service*

The Illusion of Immortality

The Independent Mind

*The Philosophy of
Humanism*

(as editor)

Dialogue on John Dewey

*Dialogue on George
Santayana*

*Man Answers Death: An
Anthology of Poetry*

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AFFIRMED

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To

HELEN LAMB LAMONT

Contents

Preface

PART ONE

1. The Perennial Debate

2. Can Freedom and Determinism Co-Exist?

3. Contingency and a Pluralistic World

PART TWO

4. The Role of Potentiality and Deliberation

5. Causation and Free Choice

6. Some Practical Problems

6.1. Character and Freedom of Choice

6.2. Forbearance and

Preface

I have been thinking about the question of freedom of choice and determinism for more than forty years, ever since I began my professional study of philosophy at Columbia University in 1926. During these four decades I have done a vast amount of reading on this issue, accumulated extensive notes, participated in private discussions and public debates, and made every effort to arrive at intelligent

PART ONE

1: The Perennial Debate

The “labyrinthine dispute” over freedom of choice and determinism has been one of the great perennial issues in Western philosophy ever since the intellectual flowering of ancient Greece from the sixth to the fourth centuries B.C. Referring to several of the pre-Socratic philosophers, Plutarch writes:

“Thales says that necessity is omnipotent, and that it exerciseth an empire over

everything. Pythagoras, that the world is invested by necessity. Parmenides and Democritus, that there is nothing in the world but what is necessarily, and that this same necessity is otherwise called fate, justice, providence, and the architect of the world.”

[Plutarch's Morals (Boston: Little, Brown, 1870), Vol. Ill, p. 129.]

Of the thinkers cited by Plutarch, Democritus (c. 480- c. 370 B.C.), a complete determinist and progenitor of the atomic

theory verified some two millennia later, gave the clearest formulation of determinism. He states:

“The causes of things now coming into being . . . have no beginning; but from infinite time back, all things that were and are and will be are foreordained by necessity.”

[Quoted from Plutarch by Cyril Bailey, The Greek Atomists and Epicurus (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), p. 120.]

“It were better,”

contends Epicurus,

“to follow the myths about the gods than to become a slave to the ‘destiny’ of the natural philosophers; for the former suggests a hope of placating the gods by worship, whereas the latter involves a necessity which knows no placation.”

[Quoted ibid., p. 318.]

In the first century B.C., Lucretius, the great philosopher poet of ancient

Rome, adopted the system of Epicurus and describes in his masterly work. *On the Nature of Things*, the “swerve” of the atoms that makes freedom of choice possible:

**This truth besides I fain
would have thee learn
Ere thou proceed: when
downwards through the
void.**

**Straight on by force of their
own weight, are borne
The primal bodies, quite at
random times
And random places, some
will push aside**

A little space, yet only just
so much

As thou might'st! call the
slightest change of trend.

Were they not wont to
swerve, then must they all
Like drops of rain straight
down through space
profound

Forever fall, nor could there
e'er arise

A single meeting, or a single
blow

Among the first beginnings;
so in all

The realm of nature naught
would come to birth. . . .

Dost not, then, see by now

that though oft times
A force without doth drive
men on, and e'en
Against their will doth thrust
them headlong, still
There doth remain a
something in our breast
Which hath the power to
hamper and to thwart—
Something at whose behest
our matter's store
May be at times constrained
to turn its course
Now here, now there,
throughout the limbs, or
now.

Spurred headlong forward,
feel the curb and rein
And once again be brought

to stand at rest?

[Lucretius, On the Nature of Things, tr. by Charles E. Bennett (New York: Walter J. Black, 1946), pp. 66-67, 69.]

It is not my intention in this book to discuss in depth or even to summarize the opinions of the outstanding philosophers concerning freedom of choice and determinism. Suffice it to say that in the intervening 2,000 years since Lucretius, every philosopher of note has

taken part in this age-long controversy as to whether a man is a puppet of necessity and a toy of circumstance, or the captain of his soul and, within limits, the master of his fate.

In 1884 William James, one of the best known exponents of free choice, wrote:

“A common opinion prevails that the juice has ages ago been pressed out of the free-will controversy, and that no new champion can do more than warm up

stale arguments which everyone has heard. This is a radical mistake. I know of no subject less worn out, or in which inventive genius has a better chance of breaking open new ground—not, perhaps, of forcing a conclusion or of coercing assent, but of deepening our sense of what the issue between the two parties really is, of what the ideas of fate and of free-will imply.”

[William James, “The Dilemma of Determinism,” The Will to Believe and Other

Essays in Popular Philosophy (New York: Longmans, Green, 1923), p. 145.]

Today, more than eighty years after James's statement, the situation remains much the same. The controversy over freedom of choice is sharp and lively both in America and in Europe, where Jean-Paul Sartre and Existentialism have brought the question to the fore since the end of World War II. In the United States and England, articles, books, symposia and radio

forums continue to debate the issue. Dr. John David Mabbott, President of St. John's College, Oxford, phrases the problem in terms of a great philosophical drama:

“Could it be possible . . . that the behavior of a single species on a minor planet in one of the countless solar systems should escape a type of determination which had been found to apply to the smallest particles of matter and the largest and most distant heavenly bodies?”

determinism. *Fatalism* in the broad philosophic sense is equivalent to determinism, but has a somewhat more passive connotation. The fatalist is far more inclined than the determinist to lean back and let the world take its course. In his essay “On Fate” Cicero gives a classic example of fatalism:

“If it is fated for you to recover from this illness, you will recover whether you call in a doctor or do not; similarly, if it is fated for you not to recover from this

illness, you will not recover whether you call in a doctor or do not; and either your recovery or non-recovery is fated; therefore there is no point in calling in a doctor.' This mode of arguing is rightly called 'idle' and indolent, because the same train of reasoning will lead to the entire abolition of action from life."

[Cicero, "On Fate," De Oratore (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1942), Vol. II, p. 225.]

To cite William James

again, determinism

“professes that those parts of the universe already laid down absolutely appoint and decree what the other parts shall be. The future has no ambiguous possibilities hidden in its womb: the part we call the present is compatible with only one totality. Any other future complement than the one fixed from eternity is impossible. The whole is in each and every part, and welds it with the rest into an absolute unity, an iron block, in which there can be

no equivocation or shadow of turning.”

[James, *op. cit.*, p. 150.]

A few philosophers have maintained that the unceasing dispute over free will is simply a matter of semantics. Thus David Hume in his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) asserts:

“I hope, therefore, to make it appear that all men have ever agreed in the doctrine both of necessity and of

liberty, according to any reasonable sense, which can be put on these terms; and that the whole controversy has hitherto turned merely upon words.”

[Charles W. Hendel, Jr. (ed.) Hume Selections (New York: Scribners, 1927), p. 161.]

John Stuart Mill in the nineteenth century and Moritz Schlick in the twentieth take a position similar to Hume's. Professor Schlick, one of the founders of the Vienna

Circle of logical positivists, calls the question of freedom of choice a “pseudo-problem.” I reject the reasoning of these three thinkers.

The elusive issue of free choice and determinism has traditionally been just as important in religion as philosophy. This is clearly the case as regards Buddhism and Hinduism, in both of which the law of *karma* deterministically settles the status of each individual in his successive reincarnations; in Mohammedanism, which from its inception has

stressed its founder's doctrine of preordained destiny or *Kismet*; and in Christianity, in which both Catholic and Protestant theologians and churchmen have wrestled perpetually with the theory of divine predestination in relation to free will.

At the height of the Renaissance the great Erasmus stated:

“Among the many difficulties encountered in Holy Scripture—and there are many of them—none presents a more perplexed

labyrinth than the problem of the freedom of the will. In ancient and more recent times philosophers and theologians have been vexed by it to an astonishing degree, but, as it seems to me, with more exertion than success on their part.”

*[Erasmus-Luther,
Discourse on Free Will
(New York: Ungar,
1961), pp. 34.]*

The debate on this theme was going strong as far back as the fourth and fifth centuries A. D. when St.

Concerning Free Will
(1524). Luther returned
blow for blow in his
philippic, *The Enslaved*
Will (1525).
Characteristically, Luther
declared that

“God foreknows nothing
contingently, but . . .
foresees, purposes and
does all things according to
His immutable, eternal and
infallible will. This
thunderbolt throws free will
flat and utterly dashes it to
pieces.”

[Ibid., p. 106.]

foredoomed to eternal damnation, including new-born infants who died after a few days. In harsh language Edwards warned:

“The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire. . . . You are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. . . . There will be no end to this

exquisite horrible misery.”

[Jonathan Edwards, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” Puritan Sage: Collected Writings of Jonathan Edwards (New York: Library Publishers, 1953), pp. 372,375-76.]

Edwards waged unremitting battle against the freewill heresy of Jacobus Arminius and the Arminians and wrote one of the great classics against the doctrine of free choice. He gave it the formidable title, *A Careful and Strict*

in 1827, a General Conference of Free Will Baptists was organized. This organization gave way in 1935 to the National Association of Free Will Baptists. The Free Will Baptist Church has its headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee and had attained by 1966 a membership of 255,000.

The Free Will Baptists hold that

“God has endowed man with the power of free choice, and governs him by moral laws and motives;

and this power of free choice is the exact measure of man's responsibility. All events are present with God from everlasting to everlasting; but His knowledge of them does not in any sense cause them, nor does He decree all events which He knows will occur."

[A Treatise of the Faith and Practice of the Original Free Will Baptists (Nashville: National Association of Free Will Baptists, 1962), pp. 8-9, See also Damon C. Dodd, The

Free Will Baptist Story, Nashville: National Association of Free Will Baptists, 1956).]

Theological determinism has also acted as a catalyst in the controversy over the so-called “problem of evil”: How can an omnipotent and totally good God, who absolutely controls everything that goes on in the universe, permit all the evil, pain, misery, violence and bloodshed that have afflicted the human race since it first appeared upon this earth? Logically, this problem of evil is insoluble,

However, in this brief review I am concentrating on writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and am presenting some highlights in their discussion of our problem. In his novel, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, Thornton Wilder weaves into the story a variation on theological determinism. When five Peruvians crossing a rope bridge near Lima are hurled to their death as it suddenly breaks at noon on July 20, 1714, Brother Juniper, a Franciscan monk, becomes convinced that

supernatural causes were at work. By searching into the details of the victims' lives, Brother Juniper tries to demonstrate that it was God's plan for them all to be on the bridge at the fatal moment. He sees in the accident a divine intent to have

“the wicked visited by destruction and the good called early to Heaven. He thought he saw pride and wealth confounded as an object lesson to the world, and he thought he saw humility crowned and

rewarded for the edification of the city.”

[Thornton Wilder, The Bridge of San Luis Rey (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1928), p. 219.]

His extensive researches and pious conclusions Brother Juniper put into an enormous book. The result was that the authorities soon burned both book and author in the public square. In Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, the Second Epilogue gives an outstanding discussion of the theme of

freedom and determinism. In this lively essay Tolstoy comes out on the side of universal necessity.

“If the will of every man were free,”

he argues,

“that is, if each man could act as he pleased, all history would be a series of disconnected incidents. If in a thousand years even one man in a million could act freely, that is, as he chose, it is evident that one single free act of that man’s

in violation of the laws governing human action would destroy the possibility of the existence of any laws for the whole of humanity.”

[Leo Tolstoy, War and Peace (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1942), p. 1336.]

In *A Mummer's Tale* by Anatole France, Dr. Socrates upholds the determinist viewpoint when he urges that M. Chevalier was not to be blamed for his suicide, because it was preordained

from eternity. Says the eloquent Dr. Socrates:

“To call upon a poor wretch to answer for his actions! Why, even when the solar system was still no more than a pale nebula, forming, in the ether, a fragile halo, whose circumference was a thousand times greater than the orbit of Neptune, we had all of us, for ages past, been fully conditioned, determined and irrevocably destined, and your responsibility, my responsibility, Chevalier's

and that of all men, had been, not mitigated, but abolished beforehand. All our movements, the result of previous movements of matter, are subject to the laws which govern the cosmic forces, and the human mechanism is merely a particular instance of the universal mechanism."

[Anatole France, A Mummer's Tale, tr. by Charles E. Roche (New York: Gabriel Wells, 1924), p. 119.]

In Herman Melville's

Moby Dick, Captain Ahab feels that some imperious destiny is driving him on in his relentless, fatal pursuit of the Great White Whale.

“What is it,”

Ahab cries,

“what nameless,
inscrutable, unearthly thing
is it; what cozening, hidden
lord and master, and cruel
remorseless emperor
commands me; that against
all natural lovings and
longings, I so keep pushing,
and crowding, and

jamming myself on all the time; recklessly making me ready to do what in my own proper, natural heart, I durst not so much as dare? Is Ahab, Ahab? Is it I, God, or who, that lifts this arm? But if the great sun move not of himself; but is an errand-boy in heaven; nor one single star can revolve, but by some invisible power; how then can this one small heart beat; this one small brain think thoughts; unless God does that beating, does that thinking, does that living, and not I? . . .

“By heaven, man, we are turned round and round in this world, like yonder windlass, and Fate is the handspike. And all the time, lo! that smiling sky, and this unsounded sea! . . . This whole act’s immutably decreed. Twas rehearsed by thee and me a billion years before this ocean rolled. Fool! I am the Fates’ lieutenant; I act under orders.”

[Herman Melville, Moby Dick or the Great While Whale (Boston: Page Co., 1919), pp. 504-05, 521.]

one time it entered into my own life because for several years I was confused with a practicing astrologer, Mr. C. W. Lemont, who like myself lived on Riverside Drive in New York City.]

**Men at some time are
masters of their fates:
The fault, dear Brutus, is
not in our stars,
But in ourselves that we are
underlings. . . .**

*[William Shakespeare,
Julius Caesar, Act I, Sc.
2.]*

Edmund in *King Lear* is even more scornful of astrology:

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune—often the surfeit of our own behaviour—we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars: as if we were villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves and treachers by spherical predominance, drunkards, liars and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary

influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on: an admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star! My father compounded with my mother under the dragon's tail, and my nativity was under ursa major. 'Sfoot! I should have been that I am had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled at my bastardizing.

[William Shakespeare, King Lear, Act 1, Sc. 2.]

A masterpiece of

poetically rendered
determinism appears in
Edward Fitzgerald's *The
Rubaiyat of Omar
Khayyam*:

We are no other than a
moving row
Of Magic Shadow-shapes
that come and go
Round with the
Sun-illumined Lantern held
In Midnight by the Master of
the Show;

But helpless Pieces of the
Game He plays
Upon this Chequer-board of
Nights and Days;

Hither and thither moves,
and checks, and slays.
And one by one back in the
Closet lays. . . .

The Moving Finger writes;
and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety
nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel
half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out
a Word of it.

And that inverted Bowl they
call the Sky,
Whereunder crawling
cooped we live and die,
Lift not your hands to It for

help—for It
Impotently moves as you or
I.

With Earth's first Clay They
did the Last Man knead.

And there of the Last
Harvest sowed the Seed:
And the first Morning of
Creation wrote
What the Last Dawn of
Reckoning shall read.

The Rubaiyat poses the
same conundrum that
perennially perplexed the
Christian theologians:

O Thou, who didst with

**Pitfall and with Gin
Beset the Road I was to
wander in,
Thou wilt not with
Predestined Evil round
Enmesh, and then impute
my Fall to Sin!**

Thomas Hardy's lines in
his great poem, *The
Dynasts*, are reminiscent of
The Rubaiyat:

**The Immanent, that urgeth
all,
Rules what may or may not
befall!**

Ere systemed suns were

globed and lit
The slaughters of the race
were writ.

And wasting wars, by land
and sea,
Fixed, like all else,
immutably! . .

[Thomas Hardy, The Dynasts, A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars (New York & London: Macmillan, 1904), p. 87.]

Why doth IT so and so, and
ever so,
This viewless, voiceless
Turner of the Wheel? . . .

[Ibid., p. 2.]

We are but thistle-globes on
heaven's high gales,
And whither blown, or
when, or how, or why,
Can choose us not at all!

[Ibid., p. 103.]

With unflinching consistency, Hardy also presents a sombre and deterministic view in his novels, in which heartbreak and unhappiness are major themes. For him humanity is doomed to permanent frustration and tragedy. His profound pessimism

seems to be bound up with the conviction that an iron necessity rules mankind and the universe.

[Cf. pp. 153-54.]

John Masefield in an eloquent sonnet harks back to the ancient predilection for astrology, and protests against determinism as applied to man:

**If all be governed by the
moving stars,
If passing planets bring
events to be,
Searing the face of Time
with bloody scars,**

Drawing men's souls even
as the moon the sea,
If as they pass they make a
current pass
Across man's life and heap
it to a tide,
We are but pawns, ignobler
than the grass
Cropped by the beast and
crunched and tossed aside.
Is all this beauty that doth
inhabit heaven
Train of a planet's fire? Is all
this lust
A chymic means by warring
stars contriven
To bring the violets out of
Caesar's dust?
Better be grass, or in some

hedge unknown
The spilling rose whose
beauty is its own.

*[John Masefield,
Poems by John
Masefield—Complete
Edition with Recent
Poems (New York:
Macmillan, 1953), p.
374.]*

A philosophy of
determinism is
undoubtedly congenial to a
considerable number of
persons because it seems to
relieve them of exertion in
the solving of their
problems and lessens

worry about a future that is already completely predestined. Sir Isaiah Berlin, Professor of Social and Political Theory at Oxford University, observes:

“Where there is no choice there is no anxiety; and a happy release from responsibility. Some human beings have always preferred the peace of imprisonment, a contented security, a sense of having at last found one’s proper place in the cosmos, to the painful conflicts and

perplexities of the disordered freedom of the world beyond the walls.”

[Isaiah Berlin, Historical Inevitability (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 74.]

When Jawaharlal Nehru was Prime Minister of India and daily confronted with awesome responsibilities involving 400,000,000 people, he remarked to a friend that he had a feeling of “nostalgia” for his years in prison because there he

had so few decisions to make.

[Letter from Prime Minister Nehru to the author's wife, Helen Lamb Lamont, 1952.]

Dostoievsky depicts men's effort to elude freedom in his fable of Jesus returning to earth during the Spanish Inquisition. We see Jesus face to face with the Grand Inquisitor, who solemnly declares:

". . . nothing has ever been more insupportable for a

man and a human society than freedom. ... I tell Thee that man is tormented by no greater anxiety than to find someone quickly to whom he can hand over that gift of freedom with which the ill-fated creature is born. . . . Didst Thou forget that man prefers peace, and even death, to freedom of choice in the knowledge of good and evil?"

[Fyodor Dostoievsky, The Brothers Karamazov, tr. by Constance Garnett (New York: Random House,

1933), pp. 262-264.]

The Grand Inquisitor proposes to burn the reincarnated Jesus at the stake for his crime in placing upon man this “fearful burden of free choice.” [*Ibid.*, p. 264.]

A widely read book over the past twenty years, *Escape From Freedom*, by Erich Fromm, deals with yet another aspect of the same general theme. According to the author

“. . . modern man still is anxious and tempted to

surrender his freedom to dictators of all kinds, or to lose it by transforming himself into a small cog in the machine, well fed, and well clothed, yet not a free man but an automaton.”

[Erich Fromm, Escape From Freedom (New York: Avon Books, 1965), p. xii.]

Man's isolation in twentieth-century society is, asserts Dr. Fromm,

“unbearable and the alternatives he is confronted with are either

to escape from the burden of his freedom into new dependencies and submissions, or to advance to the full realization of positive freedom which is based upon the uniqueness and individuality of man.”

[Ibid., p. viii.]

To Fromm another psychological factor in the individual's avoidance of freedom is that he does not want to be continually beset with doubts. This age-long “quest for certainty” has been a prime motivation in the working

such organizations as business corporations, churches, government bureaus, labor unions, political parties, universities, and associations and clubs of all sorts. “Organizations,” Dr. Kurtz says,

“become independent entities with ‘personalities’ of their own. . . . One of the reasons why the individual today frequently feels powerless, impotent, and unable to affect decision-making processes in his society is that

decisions emanate from organizations, not individuals; it is organizations which contend for power, not individuals. . . . The point is that individuals by themselves have been shorn of power. Moral choices are largely within the context of an organizational structure. . . . Insofar as the individual is swallowed up by the impersonal bureaucracy there is a decline in his personal responsibility and a subtle corrosion of his integrity.”

them when it seems pertinent.

In the branch of philosophy known as ethics a persistent question is: how can we attribute ethical responsibility to men, and punish them for wrongdoing, if we accept the determinist thesis that their choices and actions are predetermined? For this means that individuals cannot help doing what they do and are therefore morally without guilt. The free choice view, however, sees men as possessing the freedom either to do or not to do what they know is

intelligent young citizens. Or children themselves will take their father and mother to task for the way in which they were brought up.

“In recent years a new form of punishment has been imposed on middle-aged and elderly parents. Their children, now in their twenties, thirties or even forties, present them with a modern grievance; ‘My analysis proves that *you* are responsible for my neurosis.’ Overawed by these authoritative

statements, the poor tired parents fall easy victims to the newest variations on the scapegoat theory.”

[Edmund Bergler, The Superego (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1952), p. 320.]

Admittedly, no parents achieve perfection in the rearing of their children. Yet the fact is that children, too, possess freedom of choice. It appears at an early age and develops with the intelligence and other capacities of the youthful personality. Children, then,

share the responsibility for their behavior and emerging characters with their parents, relatives, teachers and friends.

Thought is of critical importance in the exercise of decision at any age. It is to be remembered that the word *intelligence* originates in the Latin *inter* (between) and *legere* (to choose). However, much human activity is not the result of deliberate choice. Some of our most important functions, such as breathing and the circulation of the blood, are fortunately automatic, as

hunger and thirst because he was incapable of choosing between food and water that were located at two points equally distant from him. A man in a similar situation, the fable continues, would have resolved "the equilibrium of opposing motives" through deliberation and free choice. In *The Divine Comedy*, Dante discusses variations on this theme of Buridan's Ass. And Beatrice tells him:

**"The greatest gift which
God in His bounty**

bestowed in creating . . .
was freedom of the will,
with which the creatures
that have intelligence, they
all and they alone, were
and are endowed.”

*[Dante Alighieri,
Paradise, Canto V,
verses 17ff.]*

On the other hand, Edgar
Lee Masters in his poem
“Roger Heston” in *Spoon
River Anthology* suggests
that animals may have free
will:

Oh many times did Ernest
Hyde and I

Argue about the freedom of
the will.

My favorite metaphor was
Prickett's cow

Roped out to grass, and
free you know as far

As the length of the rope.

One day while arguing so,
watching the cow

Pull at the rope to get
beyond the circle

Which she had eaten bare.

Out came the stake, and
tossing up her head,
She ran for us.

“What's that, free-will or
what?” said Ernest,
running.

I fell just as she gored me to

“As the future in the deterministic framework possesses the character of absolute necessity, it acquires ipso facto the status of reality; it becomes something actually existing, a sort of disguised and hidden present which remains hidden only from our limited knowledge, just as distant regions of space are hidden from our sight. ‘Future’ is merely a label given by us to the unknown part of the present reality, which exists in the same degree as scenery hidden from our eyes. As this

hidden portion of the present is contemporary with the portion accessible to us, the temporal relation between the present and the future is eliminated; the future loses its status of 'futurity' because instead of succeeding the present it coexists with it."

[Milic Capek, The Philosophical Impact of Contemporary Physics (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1961), pp. 334-35.]

As applied to literature, for instance, the idea of

determinism connotes that every last line, phrase, word and punctuation mark in the books, plays or poetry of every writer in history were destined to emerge in the precise form they finally took.

The philosophic or religious determinist runs into additional trouble when he is compelled by force of logic to admit that his own position and the brilliant arguments supporting it are all necessitated from aeons back by the iron laws of cause and effect. And he must extend the paradox by

saying that my own stand in favor of the free choice thesis is also preordained and that my faulty thinking constitutes an unfortunate inevitability in the great onrush of fate. The mind reels and revolts in the face of these extremes demanded by the determinist doctrine.

Becoming personal for a moment, I want to try to throw light on our central issue by analyzing one of my most frequent activities—public speaking. Almost always, whether at a meeting or over the radio, I speak extemporaneously

life, but arises directly from human feeling and functioning that seem as real as pleasure or pain.

This intuition, then, which recurs day in and day out, is a datum of immediate experience. As the Utilitarian philosopher, Henry Sidgwick, says:

“ . . . it is unlike the erroneous intuitions which occur in the exercise of the senses; as e.g., the imperfections of sight and hearing. For experience soon teaches me to regard these as appearances

whose suggestions are misleading; but no amount of experience of the sway of motives even tends to make me distrust my intuitive consciousness that in resolving after deliberation I exercise free choice as to which of the motives acting on me shall prevail.”

[Quoted in Paul Edwards and Arthur Pap (eds.) A Modern Introduction to Philosophy: Readings from Classical and Contemporary Sources (New York: Collier-Macmillan,

1966), p. 6.]

Horace M. Kallen,
Professor of Social
Philosophy at the New
School for Social Research,
asserts:

“That the experience of freedom is the experience of a reality, is a belief as old as philosophy itself, and is shared no less by necessitarians who prove with argument that the belief is a disguised error than by libertarians who affirm that it is a self-evident truth. Both start

from an experience of freedom, the first moving to deny, the second to confirm the reality of that terminus a quo [starting point]. And the deniers could not deny if they lacked the continuing freedom to search out and to devise the means whereby they strip away the disguise and expose the error.”

[Horace M. Kalien. “The Comic Spirit in the Freedom of Man,” Teachers College Record (Vol. 68, No. 3, Dec. 1966), p. 187.]

“Conceive, I beg, that a stone, while continuing in motion, should be capable of thinking and knowing, that it is endeavoring, as far as it can, to continue to move. Such a stone, being conscious merely of its own endeavor and deeply interested therein, would believe itself to be completely free, and would think that it continued in motion solely because of its own wish. Now such is this freedom of man’s will that everyone boasts of possessing, and which consists only in this, that

men are aware of their own desires and ignorant of the causes by which those desires are determined. ... As this misconception is innate in all men, it is not easily conquered.”

[Spinoza's Works, tr. by R. H. M. Elwes (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1919), Utter LXII, pp. 390-91.]

Baron d'Holbach, one of the French Encyclopedists of the eighteenth century, employs a figure of speech similar to Spinoza's:

“‘But, you will say, I feel free.’ This is an illusion, that may be compared to that of the fly in the fable, who, lighting upon the pole of a heavy carriage, applauded himself for directing its course. Man, who thinks himself free, is a fly, who imagines he has power to move the universe, while he is himself unknowingly carried along by it.”

[Baron d’Holbach, Good Sense; or. Natural Ideas (New York: G. Vale, 4th ed., 1856), pp. 51-52.]

I must disagree with Spinoza and Holbach; and I would add that the dynamics of free choice runs so deep in human nature that even those who sincerely believe in fatalism or universal determinism *act* to a large degree as if they had freedom of choice. The Mohammedans, whose supernatural religion preaches a preordained fate for every individual, are not habitually sluggish and inactive. On the contrary, they are among the most militant warriors in history. The anti-religious Communists, whose

secular philosophy promises, on the other hand, the inevitable triumph of communism everywhere through the operation of Historical Materialism and economic determinism, are among the most energetic workers for conscious goals that the world has ever seen.

To repeat the central affirmation of this book, men possess freedom of choice and it is one of their most significant powers. This freedom, like thinking itself, is deeply grounded in human nature and is a universal characteristic of

2: Can Freedom and Determinism Co-Exist?

When in the memorable motion picture *Lawrence of Arabia* the fatalistic Mohammedan fighters wanted to persuade Colonel Lawrence of the impossibility of one of his proposed military expeditions, they said, shaking their heads, “It is written.” To which Lawrence’s spirited retort was always “*Nothing* is written.” The film proceeds to show how in each case he successfully urged the Arab

philosophers have committed the same error.

To phrase our central issue as “freedom of choice *versus* determinism” would be quite misleading. For freedom and necessity do not rule each other out; they frequently go hand in hand. Indeed, throughout human existence there is an interlocking pattern of *both* in terms of *relative* determinism and *relative* freedom. The recognition of this fact is the beginning of wisdom for understanding the problem of free choice.

The first place to look for

the co-existence of freedom and determinism is in the characteristic development and functioning of Homo sapiens. All normal human beings, owing to the vital determinisms working within them, will, if they remain alive, grow in bodily strength and stature to adolescence and adulthood, will develop strong sexual desires and will eventually die—though exactly when, where and how, nobody can predict. Nothing is more certain for us than death and nothing more uncertain than the precise hour at which it will strike.

These deterministic predictabilities, however, which apply to man as man, do not nullify freedom of choice; they provide a framework within which it operates and thereby a focus for men's energies.

Not only man's respiratory and circulatory systems function on a deterministic basis, as I indicated earlier, but also his digestive, reproductive and ductless gland systems. These various key systems have an extraordinary capacity for self-regulation, and interact with one

another and with other physiological functions to produce a complex organism with the most prodigious powers and potentialities ever evolved upon this earth. It was such considerations as these that inspired Lamettrie, a French materialist philosopher of the eighteenth century and a forerunner of the Encyclopedists, to write his book, *Man a Machine* (1748). We can accept much of what Lamettrie said about the mechanistic functioning of human beings, but he went all the

voluntary action is transformed into automatic reflex behavior following upon the repeated association of a particular reaction with a particular external stimulus. Thus, a beginner at driving an automobile quickly learns to stop when he sees a red light gleaming at an intersection. This stopping soon becomes a conditioned reflex rather than a genuine choice. Reflex action on the level of abstractions is also frequent, as when, after thorough training in elementary mathematics,

one utilizes addition and subtraction.

The conditioned reflex or response is basic for the building of habits and constitutes an additional form of human or animal functioning with deterministic aspects.

An individual may temporarily interdict an established reflex if some unusual situation arises, as when a policeman at an intersection beckons a driver to come through a red light. The behaviorist school in psychology has made the conditioned

reflex the doctrinal keystone of its mechanistic interpretation of all human choice and action. But, as I see it, conditioned reflexes can never account for the entire conscious life of a man unless all novelty disappears and every day becomes in every detail an exact replica of preceding days.

The human ability to think created an altogether new level of behavior among living creatures and led to the emergence of free choice. Thinking and choosing of course have a physical base and in their

causal efficacy rely continually upon a man's internal determinants. Since animals in general are not endowed with the attribute of abstract, conceptual thought, they presumably do not have freedom of choice. Their choices are *instinctually* determined. Men have the power to *improve* on instinctual determinism through free choice and reason. They can control a powerful instinct, such as that of procreation, as when they adopt some method for planned parenthood; and they can

even nullify an instinct, that of self-preservation, as when they commit suicide, or voluntarily risk or lose their lives in dedication to a cause.

The very nature of man demands and determines that when a normal person's mental capacities reach a certain stage, he will start to exercise freedom of choice. It is a deterministic law, structured in one's genetic inheritance, that free choice shall emerge. The distinguished Viennese psychiatrist, Viktor E. Frankl, develops this

thought further:

“If we wanted to define man, we would have to call him that entity which has freed itself from whatever has determined it (determined it as biological-psychological-sociological type): that entity, in other words, that transcends all these determinants either by conquering them and shaping them, or by deliberately submitting to them.”

[Viktor E. Frankl, The Doctor and the Soul

techniques to deal with disease and disability: insulin to control diabetes, quinine to control malaria, and inoculations against smallpox, typhoid fever, polio and other diseases. All curative drugs, all measures effective against disease, are based upon if-then laws. But these laws are not self-administrating; it is physicians and surgeons, in consultation with their patients, who decide when and how to administer the drugs and medical techniques.

The science of medicine well illustrates how men

“. . . the undeterminable and utterly spontaneous are not amenable to control and to use, which are the agencies of Human Freedom. It is earthquake and tidal wave, cancer and other unconquered disease, which we cannot control, that make us afraid and keep us bond. For mankind hence the discovery of determinism is the beginning of freedom. Our knowledge of the mechanisms which work the world we live in frees us from their compulsions. To know how a thing happens

is to be the master of the event, to be in a position to transform a power that commands into a power that serves.”

[Horace M. Kallen, “What Is Real and What Is Illusory in Human Freedom,” in Horace M. Kallen (ed.) Freedom in the Modern World (New York: Coward-McCann, 1928), pp. 298-99.]

So it is that successful human living utilizes scientific laws as *means* for the achievement of *ends* that are decided upon by

laws at the same time limit the extent of that freedom. They set boundaries to effective action. The law of gravity is essential to the stability of houses, office buildings and skyscrapers, but it brings death to those who fall from high places. The mechanisms that enable an airplane to fly through the air prevent it from traveling under the sea like a submarine. Water helps the crops to grow, but flood will ruin both farms and farmers.

Despite these limitations, the larger the number of if-then laws an individual

knows how to put into effect, the greater is his scope of action and freedom. This is the point of the adage, “Freedom is the knowledge of necessity.”

[Cf. Frederick Engels: “Freedom therefore consists in the control over ourselves and over external nature which is founded on the knowledge of natural necessity.” Anti-Duhring (New York: International Publishers), Marxist Library, Vol. XVIII, p. 131.]

battery would not work because of the zero weather.

To summarize this matter in general terms:

“In any one determinate system such as mechanics or economics, the proposition ‘the event B will occur’ may be the inevitable logical consequence of the proposition ‘the event A will occur.’ But in the physical world nothing is inevitable, for some event C which is not a member of that particular system may

occur and prevent the occurrence of B.”

[William Gruen,
“Determinism, Fatalism
and Historical
Materialism,” *Journal of
Philosophy* (Nov. 5,
1939), p. 627.]

In the second place, science in general has more and more given up the aim of achieving *absolute* truth in factual inquiry and has been expressing scientific findings, predictions and laws in terms of various degrees of probability. This reliance on probabilism

apply to all events in the cosmos. Tied in closely with this postulate is that of the uniformity of Nature or predictive uniformity, which assumes that in our world

“a given group of events will show in subsequent experience the same kind and degree of interconnection that they have shown already.”

[Edwin A. Burtt, Right Thinking: A Study of Its Principles and Methods (New York: Harpers, 1948), p. 304.]

There is another form of necessity in addition to that exemplified by fixed uniformities in Nature. That is the necessity involved in deduction, as illustrated in the traditional Aristotelian system of logic or in the Euclidean system of mathematics. The deductive method has been of immense importance in the advance of the various sciences. The laws of the syllogism demand that if a certain major premise and a certain minor premise are given, then a certain conclusion is bound to follow. To cite the classic

example: All men are mortal; Socrates is a man; therefore Socrates is mortal. In correct deduction one statement follows from another *necessarily* if it follows at all; but of course no causation is involved. These same principles hold for mathematics. For instance, it is *logically* inevitable for an odd number always immediately to succeed an even number.

To think, however, that in the world of concrete reality, causes and effects stand in the same relation

as do premises and their conclusions in logic, is to confuse the temporal meaning of “follows” with its logical, non-temporal meaning.

[See John Dewey, “The Superstition of Necessity,” The Monist (April, 1893), pp. 362-79.]

As Professor Capek explains in his penetrating article, “The Doctrine of Necessity Re-Examined”:

“Only when causal connection is not conceived

as a deductive implication, can it retain its dynamic successive character which appears as a foreign and unaccountable element in the necessitarian scheme.”

[Milic Capek, “The Doctrine of Necessity Re-Examined,” Review of Metaphysics (Sept. 1951), p. 47.]

Professor Charles Hartshorne of the University of Texas pursues the argument and suggests that historically speaking the determinist fallacy originated mainly from a

misunderstanding of the relation between deductive and inductive reasoning:

“Deduction gives certainly, necessity, exactitude; induction gives probability, more or less irresistible tendencies, approximations. Since the certain and absolute knowledge derived from mathematics is flattering to our sense of power, it is natural that we should try to interpret our scientific discoveries in accordance with the mathematical ideal, especially since

mathematics, being the simplest science, was the first to achieve a high technical development (Euclidean geometry). . . . It is a fact that modern determinism arose in an age which did not adequately appreciate the inductive character of scientific method, the age of Descartes and Spinoza; and that the ancient determinists were the Stoics, the champions of deduction, whereas the Epicureans, who believed in chance and freedom, were the apostles of

induction.”

[Charles Hartshorne, Beyond Humanism: Essays in the New Philosophy of Nature (Chicago, New York: Willett, Clark, 1937), pp. 148-49.]

The truth is that many thinkers in the West have read the deductive determinism relevant only to sound reasoning into the behavior of all objects and events in the great cosmic kaleidoscope. So impressed were they by the triumphs of science during the past

Hook of New York
University:

“During the twentieth century the overwhelming majority of historians have been in unconscious thralldom to one or another variety of social determinism.”

[Sidney Hook, The Hero in History: A Study in Limitation and Possibility (New York: John Day, 1943), p. 19.]

As for American
psychology, its
predominant attitude,

according to Professor Carl A. Rogers, Fellow of the Western Behavioral Sciences Institute, is to treat man as a mere object to be scientifically controlled and to deny the existence of personal freedom or free choice. In a 1964 paper, “Freedom and Commitment,” Professor Rogers asserts:

“In the minds of most behavioral scientists, man is not free, nor can he as a free man commit himself to some purpose, since he is controlled by factors

outside of himself. Therefore, neither freedom nor commitment is even a possible concept in modern behavioral science as it is usually understood.”

[Carl A. Rogers, “Freedom and Commitment” (Yellow Springs, O.: American Humanist Assn., 1964), p. 1.]

Speaking of modern “philosophies of exculpation,” Joseph Wood Krutch, one of America’s most perceptive writers, tells us:

“Since dogmas do not have to be accepted in their full dogmatic rigidity in order to have a very powerful effect, the question of how clearly and how absolutely deterministic theories are held is of relatively little importance. What is important is the evident fact that educational, sociological and even criminological principles and methods have come increasingly to focus attention and effort on that aspect of man and his behavior which seems most

easily interpreted in accordance with such theories, so that even when man is not openly proclaimed to be no more than a 'product' of 'conditions' he is treated as though he were.”

[Joseph Wood Krutch, The Measure of Man (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), pp. 39-40.]

Albert Einstein, one of the great physicists of all time, was much influenced by Spinoza and was a philosophic determinist.

Einstein writes:

“The more a man is imbued with the ordered regularity of all events, the firmer becomes his conviction that there is no room left side by side of this ordered regularity for causes of a different nature. . . .”

[Albert Einstein, “Science and Religion,” in L. Bryson and L. Finkelstein (eds.) Science, Philosophy and Religion: A Symposium (New York: Conference on Science, Philosophy

and Religion in Their Relation to the Democratic Way of Life, 1941), p. 213.]

“Without the belief that it is possible to grasp the reality with our theoretical constructions, without the belief in the *inner harmony* of our world, there could be no science.”

[Albert Einstein, with Leopold Infeld, The Evolution of Physics: The Growth of Ideas from Early Concepts to Relativity and Quanta (New York: Simon and

Schuster, 1938), p. 313.]
[Italics mine—C. L.]

Hazardous as it is to disagree with so profound a thinker as Einstein, I am compelled to say that the above statements are erroneous. It is a serious fallacy to consider causality synonymous with “the ordered regularity of all events.” That regularity or uniformity does *not* apply to all events and their causes, but only to a certain class of them. For side by side with the immutable laws that constitute cosmic necessity there is the broad

3: Contingency and a Pluralistic World

If absolute determinism rules throughout the universe, including our earth, then the great cosmic Juggernaut inexorably rolls on; and all human thoughts, choices and actions were totally predetermined billions of years ago. Then, indeed, that “ordered regularity of all events,” of which Einstein speaks, becomes a fundamental truth, and everything that exists necessarily falls into the

denominators of everything that exists. In Aristotle's words, metaphysics is the science

". . which investigates being as being and the attributes which belong to this in virtue of its own nature. Now this is not the same as any of the so-called special sciences; for none of these others treats universally of being as being. They cut off a part of being and investigate the attributes of this part. . . . All these sciences mark off some particular being—some

genus, and inquire into this, but not into being simply nor qua being.”

[Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, tr. by W. D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928), *Gamma*, Ch. 1, 1003a 21-26; *Epsilon*, Ch. 1, 1025b 7-10.]

The term *star* is important in astronomy, but there are no stars in biology; the term *animal* is important in biology, but does not help to explain the behavior of stars. However, the terms *substance*,

activity, relation and causality are all fundamental in astronomy, biology and every other science. They are true metaphysical categories. There can be no explanation of *why* these particular generic traits exist; they simply *are*. To demand a reason for their existence is as futile as asking the cause of causality.

In science as well as philosophy it has frequently become fruitless to keep on asking, "Why?" At such a juncture the scientist can only say,

either may or may not be. This does *not* imply that any event is causeless.

In his definitive book on Aristotle, Professor John H. Randall, Jr., of Columbia University sharpens our definition:

"The distinction between what occurs by chance and what does not is not a distinction between what has a cause and what has no cause; it is rather a distinction between two kinds of events, all of which have determinate causes. To occur 'by chance'

means, not that there is no reason for the accident, but that factors, themselves determined by their own specific causes, do impinge on other processes, and alter and perhaps even destroy them, without being an essential part of those other processes, without belonging to their distinctive nature. . . .

[Cf. the late H. W. B. Joseph, my tutor in philosophy at New College, Oxford: "Few people really believe that anything happens

without a cause: but chance is not the negation of cause: it is the coincidence of attributes in one individual, or events in the same moment, when each has its cause, but not the same cause, and neither helps to account for the other.” (An Introduction to Logic, p. 78.)]

“For instance, a rock falls on the acorn and distorts its growth, or a squirrel eats it, and it never sprouts. These events have no relevance to

the process of growing into an oak tree, they are 'chance' events, an instance of a process 'by violence' . . . from the outside. Chance is the name given to all events caused by factors that are not relevant to the ends of natural processes, by all the non-teleological factors, the brute events interfering with the natural working out of a process, or achieving a quite different end incidentally, causing the acorn to become a squirrel's breakfast, impinging in the process

‘by violence’ from without.”

*[John II. Randall, Jr.,
Aristotle (New York:
Columbia University
Press, 1960), pp.
182-83.]*

Professor Randall sums
up the meaning of chance
as residing in

**“the causal intersections of
unrelated causal series.”**

[Ibid., p. 187.]

I am stressing this useful
definition of contingency as
the conjunction of two or
more events which have

operation. Contingency is continually initiating necessity.

Professor Sterling P. Lamprecht explains our point in his illuminating study. *Nature and History*:

“We say, and we are entitled to say, 'If this is done, then such-and-such will ensue.' But the if of this statement is as metaphysically evident as the then. The if is as truly a recognition of the contingency of the efficient factor of which the law does not even try to give an

account, as the then is a recognition of the necessity of the outcome. . . . Necessity and contingency, so far from being unconnected ideas to be taken, one wholesale and the other retail, are supplementary ideas which belong together in the analysis of every separate event.”

[Sterling P. Lamprecht, *Nature and History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), p. 114.]

In his essay, “Man’s Place

in Nature,” Professor Lamprecht provides further light:

“Contingency is often regarded as an alternative to mechanism. In fact it is a correlative aspect of nature’s ways. In our world we find that forces, once initiated, work out to their inevitable consequences. But the initiation of forces is not itself decreed. The laws of nature are statements of the mechanical phase of nature. They state the uniformities of correlation and sequence that events

manifest. The laws of nature are not, however, dictates that compel procedure—they are not statutes or prescriptive enactments. The presence of contingency in nature is not evident at a glance because it is not effectively exploited by inanimate agents. Inanimate agents react to the actual stimulus of the moment; they react, it might be said, to the superficial. Intelligent agents react to more than the actual stimulus; they react to the potentialities of the actual. And these

potentialities are always plural. . . . The alternative possibilities were present in nature from the start even though they received no notable exploitation until intelligent creatures came to pass.”

[Sterling P.
Lamprecht, *The
Metaphysics of
Naturalism* (New York:
Appleton-Century-Croft
s, 1967), pp. 192-93.]

I trust it is clear by this time that the existence of chance or contingency demolishes the case for a

contingency. When chance manifests itself in human affairs, it is frequently described as accident, coincidence or luck—good luck or bad luck. The 150 or more individuals who are struck dead by lightning every year in the United States are victims of chance in the form of extremely bad luck. On the other hand, a friend of mine encountered objective chance in the form of very good luck when, having missed his airplane flight by five minutes because his taxi was held up in a bad traffic jam, he also missed

have been considered religious miracles were undoubtedly instances of chance.

The most readily recognized examples of chance or contingency are dramatic accidents in which independently initiated causal series or event-streams meet. I have classified death from lightning as a chance event because we can find no common, relevant cause that brings a man and a stroke of lightning into conjunction at precisely 4:15 P.M. on the eighth hole of the town golf links or at a

dashing past a big oak when a dazzling fork of lightning blasted the tree on the side nearest me. I figured that I escaped death by about three feet. Next day I went out to look at the tree and found that the lightning had torn off a long strip of bark where it struck. It was sheer luck that I was not hit.

Actually, the lightning's striking the tree was a case of objective chance wholly within the non-human world. There were hundreds of other tall trees in the neighborhood that the lightning might have

hit. This contingency situation is seen even more clearly when lightning strikes a tree in a thickly forested area where there are *millions* of other similar trees. Biochemists have recently been discussing the possibility that it was chance strokes of lightning that triggered the phenomenon of life into existence. The hypothesis is that lightning, acting upon certain kinds of inanimate matter, created the amino acids that are the building blocks of the proteins that are the primary substances in all living forms.

Consider now the unfortunate fate of an unsuspecting citizen of New York City as reported in the New York *Herald Tribune* of May 28, 1944:

“A ten-pound slab of ornamental stone fell from the sixteenth floor of the Hotel Ansonia, Broadway and Seventy-third Street, at 4 P.M. yesterday and struck Miss Helen Beebe, hotel telephone operator, on the head, killing her instantly. . . . Miss Beebe had just quit her post at the hotel’s telephone exchange and

was walking south on the west side of Broadway when the stone struck her.”

[Since I sometimes took lunch at the Ansonia during the World War II years. I had a personal interest in Miss Beebe's accident. The stone slab might have hit me.]

That accident was very bad luck for Miss Beebe and a very good example of objective chance. For it represented the sudden conjunction of two presumably independent

only one such collision, and it sent the *Titanic* to the bottom of the sea.

Applying Professor Randall's definition of chance, we see that tangling with an iceberg was not part of the *Titanic's* "distinctive nature"; and that the wandering iceberg was manifestly one of those "factors, themselves determined by their own specific causes" that "impinge on other processes, and alter and perhaps even destroy them, without being an essential part of those other processes." [See p. 59.]

“It seems very obvious to me that the meeting was jointly caused by the natural forces in the two series. It was 100 percent predetermined. It was an accident only because nobody foresaw or intended it. The 1,500 passengers' beliefs that they would reach New York were false from the start.”

[Gardner Williams in Corliss Lamont (ed.) A Humanist Symposium on Metaphysics (Yellow Springs, O.: American Humanist Assn.,

1960),p. 14.]

Thomas Hardy takes the determinist view in his poem, “The Convergence of the Twain: Lines on the Loss of the Titanic.” He finds that “The immanent Will that stirs and urges everything”

Prepared a sinister mate
For her—so gaily great—
A Shape of Ice, for the time
far and dissociate.

And as the smart ship grew
In stature, grace and hue.
In shadowy silent distance

grew the Iceberg too.
Alien they seemed to be:
No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of
their later history.

Or sign that they were bent
By paths coincident
On being anon twin halves
of one august event.

Till the Spinner of the Years
Said "Now!" And each one
hears.

And consummation comes,
and jars two hemispheres.

*[Thomas Hardy, The
Poetical Works of
Thomas Hardy]*

stopped to take some photographs and had just turned to rejoin her tour group. Indisputably, there was no interacting relevant cause to account for the French lady's jumping at the exact moment she did and Miss McConnell's being at the precise spot where the body fell. The accident was really an accident and not predetermined.

All of us experience contingency at first hand in our relations with other people. Perhaps the most common mode is a totally unforeseen meeting with a

and our friends, on the other, both had a general interest in the historic and aesthetic aspects of Mont St. Michel was not a sufficiently pinpointing cause to account for our meeting at approximately ten o'clock on that particular day. The encounter obviously represented a chance intersection of two mutually independent event-streams.

Chance plays a dominant role in automobile collisions, which in the United States alone account for more than

20,000 deaths every year. However, not all such accidents are a matter of contingency. Professor Randall discusses the matter:

“A car proceeds down a road at a hundred miles an hour, and collides with another. This is not chance, but an instance of a regular causal relation between speed and disaster. But if I am driving sedately and am struck by the speeding car, that is a case of chance. To be sure, if I had seen the other car in time, I could

have avoided the collision. That is freedom, dependent on an if-then sequence, on a hypothetically necessary regular causal relation.”

[John H. Randall, Jr., in Lamont (ed.) op. ciL, pp. 19-20.]

In other words, an individual is able to put into effect an if-then law to avert the impingement of a chance event that can be expected to precipitate another if-then sequence that will have disastrous consequences.

To return to the sinking of

Shubow, my friend and classmate in the Harvard Class of 1924, for helpful suggestions about the sinking of the Titanic.]

As for icebergs in the North Atlantic, it was later learned that they generally form in Baffin Bay off the west coast of Greenland and drift south at the rate of one-half knot an hour. These various findings throw a good deal of light on why the *Titanic* collided with an iceberg, but do not provide an ultimate explanation of why chance befell in just that way. In

bound up with necessity.

For centuries scholars have argued back and forth concerning the role of accident or contingency in the history of mankind. To me it seems self-evident that chance has played an important part in historical events. For instance, in February 1933 an anarchist by the name of Joseph Zangara tried to murder President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt in Miami, Florida, as he was riding in an automobile with Mayor Cermak of Chicago. An agile woman, who

international affairs. Gamer's accession to the Presidency would have had a considerable effect on other countries. In short, chance as exemplified in the split-second deflection of a bullet by the quick action of an alert American had most significant consequences for both the United States and the world at large.

“The American Revolution might have ended in its infancy if there had not been a thick fog on the night when Washington

withdrew his defeated army from Long Island to Manhattan. Rainy,

mud-producing weather helped the French to defeat the Prussians at the Battle of Valmy and thus to save the French Revolution. . . .

The turning point in the history of this country may well have been Lee's loss of the Battle of Gettysburg; Lee said later—and many agree with him—that he would have won if Stonewall Jackson had been present; but a few months earlier, Jackson had been accidentally shot

by his own soldiers.”

[Jerome Frank, Fate and Freedom (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), p. 43.]

At the conclusion of the American Revolutionary War, numerically superior American and French troops were besieging General Cornwallis at Yorktown. Cornwallis decided to try to escape from the trap by moving his army by night across the York River and did in fact succeed in so transporting some of his soldiers.

However, a severe storm arose and prevented him from going through with the operation. Only a few days later, on October 19, 1781, Cornwallis was forced to surrender and the war was virtually terminated.

Oscar Handlin, Professor of History at Harvard University, comments on these decisive events:

"The atmospheric conditions that brought on the storm and the military conditions that caused Cornwallis's army to retreat were the product of

altogether separate chains of causes and effects.”

[Oscar Handlin, Change or Destiny; Turning Points in American History (Boston: Little, Brown, 1955), p. 192.]

In short, the causal sequence eventuating in stormy weather and the causal sequence represented by the military disposition of the Franco-American and British forces, no element in either sequence having been causally connected

with any element in the other, met in the midst of things to form a typical chance happening. This chance happening led directly to the final defeat of Cornwallis at that particular time.

[Cf. Ernest Nagel, "Determinism in History," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (March 1960), pp. 309-10, Professor Nagel disagrees with Professor Handlin and me about the Battle of Yorktown.]

History shows, too, how small contingencies in their consequences can loom large in the destiny of men and of nations. A well-known maxim of Benjamin Franklin in *Poor Richard's Almanac* reads:

“A little neglect may breed mischief; for want of a nail the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; for want of a horse the rider was lost.”

And, we may add, for want of a rider the kingdom or the battle or the

cease-fire was lost. Utilizing an analogy from non-human Nature, Emile Boutroux, a French philosopher, observed that a grain dropped by a bird could start a landslide.

The volume of fascinating essays entitled *If; or, History Rewritten*

[J. C. Squire (ed.) If; or, History Rewritten (New York: Viking Press, 1931).]

speculates about a number of the great might-have-been's of the past. In this book writers ranging from Warden H. A.

“the doctrine, lapped up in my youth, about the inevitability of events and the Moloch still devouring us today, 'historical inevitability.' I believe less and less in these more than doubtful and certainly dangerous dogmas, which tend to make us accept whatever happens as irresistible and foolhardy to oppose.”

[Bernhard Berenson, Rumor and Reflection (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952), p. 110.]

Commenting on this

statement. Sir Isaiah
writes:

“The great critic’s words are particularly timely at a moment when there is, at any rate among philosophers of history, if not among historians, a tendency to return to the ancient view that all that is, is (‘objectively viewed’) best; that to explain is (‘in the last resort’) to justify; or that to know all is to forgive all; ringing falsehoods (charitably described as half-truths) which have led to special pleading and,

indeed, obfuscation of the issue on a heroic scale.”

[Berlin, op. ciL, p. 3.]

In a provocative passage Sir Isaiah outlines what we must come to if the inevitability doctrine is true:

“To blame and praise, consider possible alternative courses of action, damn or congratulate historical figures for acting as they do or did, becomes an absurd activity. Admiration and contempt for this or that

individual may indeed continue, but it becomes akin to aesthetic judgment. We can eulogize or denounce, feel love or hatred, satisfaction and shame, but we can neither blame nor alter. Alexander, Caesar, Attila, Mohammed, Cromwell, Hitler are like floods and earthquakes, sunsets, oceans, mountains; we may admire or fear them, welcome or curse them, but to denounce or extol their acts is as sensible as addressing sermons to a tree (as Frederick the Great pointed

out with his customary pungency in the course of his attack on d'Holbach's deterministic System of Nature).”

[Ibid., p. 26.]

Sir Isaiah finds that the deterministic interpretation of history is frequently incorporated in some vast, vague, impersonal abstraction such as the Collective Unconscious, the German Spirit, the Master Race, Manifest Destiny, Faustian man, the Proletariat, the Life-Force, the Zeitgeist

(Spirit of the Age) and History itself. Large causal entities of this sort, serving much the same function as an omni-causal and supernatural God, are regarded as the Powers-that-be in human existence, and men as mere marionettes who do their bidding.

Historical Inevitability argues that determinism logically pursued turns all history into a moral judgment. This accords with Hegel's aphorism, adapted from Frederick Schiller, that "World history is the world court."

Without actually claiming that freedom of choice exists, Sir Isaiah holds that a truly deterministic world would eliminate all sense of individual responsibility. He sees the belief in determinism as

“one of the great alibis, pleaded by those who cannot and do not wish to face the facts of human responsibility, the existence of a limited but nevertheless real area of human freedom. . .

[Ibid., p. 78.]

As an example of the alibi function of determinism. Sir Isaiah recalls that Mussolini, when he learned in 1943 that the Anglo-American forces had landed in Sicily, is reported to have exclaimed, "History has seized us by the throat." The meaning of this remark was, according to Sir Isaiah, that "Men could be fought; but once 'History' herself took the field, resistance was vain." [Ibid.]

Historical Inevitability touched off a brisk debate in England. Professor Edward H. Carr, a Fellow of

Trinity College, Cambridge, came forward in his book *What Is History?* to defend the inevitability interpretation and to denounce the notion that contingency intrudes. Professor Carr writes:

“How can one discover in history a coherent sequence of cause and effect, how can we find any meaning in history, when our sequence is liable to be broken or deflected at any moment by some other, and from our point of view irrelevant sequence? . . .

Everything that the devotees of chance and contingency in history say is perfectly true and perfectly logical. It has the kind of remorseless logic which we find in *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*."

[Edward H. Carr, What Is History? (New York: Knopf, 1964), pp. 130, 138.]

Carr criticizes Sir Isaiah for insisting that it is the duty of the historian "to judge Charlemagne or Napoleon or Genghis Khan

because it is not permitted by human nature to attain perfection even in evil,” and Stubbs’s characterization of King John, “polluted with every crime that could disgrace a man.” Knowles’s verdict, quoted by Carr, is: “The historian is not a judge, still less a hanging judge.”

[Ibid., pp. 98-99.]

However, Carr does concede that even when Sir Isaiah

“talks nonsense, he earns our indulgence by talking it in an engaging and

attractive way. The disciples repeat the nonsense, and fail to make it attractive.”

[Ibid., p. 121.]

Then, commenting on the idea that no “inevitable sequence” can exist in history, Carr makes a rapier thrust:

“It is Professor Popper [Karl R. Popper, author of *The Open Society and Its Enemies*.] and Sir Isaiah Berlin who between them have flogged this very dead horse back into a

semblance of life; and some patience will be required to clear up the muddle.”

[Ibid.]

The controversy spilt over into the pages of the *Listener*, weekly publication of the British Broadcasting Corporation, in which Carr and Sir Isaiah exchanged hardhitting letters. The latter’s rebuttal says in part,

“we cannot really embrace determinism, that is,

incorporate it in our thought and action, without far more revolutionary changes in our language and outlook (some among them scarcely imaginable in terms of our ordinary words and ideas) than are dreamt of in Mr. Carr's philosophy."

[Quoted by Ved Mehta, 'The Flight of Crook-Taloned Birds—I,' New Yorker (Dec. 8, 1962), p. 78.]

Probably the most fiercely disputed form of historic determinism during the past 100 years or more has

geography, nor merely the techniques of production, such as the state of metallurgy and of machine processes. What is determining is the *total relations* of production and exchange, the entire economic structure of society.

These total economic relations express themselves at any given time in certain *property relations* which are crystallized in definite class forms covering all aspects of civilized life. This is why for Marx and Engels class struggles, often masked in

religious or nationalist movements or wars, have played the central role in human affairs. The class struggle reaches a climax in the opposition between the capitalist class and the working class, with the latter eventually attaining power *inevitably* in every nation and constructing the new classless society of communism.

In *The Communist Manifesto* of 1843 Marx and Engels proclaim:

“What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above

all, are its own grave-diggers. Its downfall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.”

[Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Communist Manifesto, in A Handbook of Marxism (New York: Random House, 1935), p. 36.]

In his Preface to the first edition of *Capital* (1867) Marx writes:

“Intrinsically, it is not a question of the higher or

lower degree of development of the social antagonisms that result from the natural laws of capitalist production. It is a question of these laws themselves, of *these tendencies working with iron necessity towards inevitable results.*”

[Karl Marx, *Capital* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1926), Vol. I, p. 13.]

[Italics mine—C. L.]

Going into more detail, Marx asserts:

“The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society—the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. *It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social*

existence determines their consciousness.”

[Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1901), pp. 11-12.]

[Italics mine—C. L.]

And Marx and Engels agree that

“Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the

semblance of
independence.”

*[Karl Marx and
Frederick Engels, The
German Ideology (New
York: International
Publishers, 1939), p. 14.]*

In correspondence
towards the end of his life,
Engels modified his
economic determinism to a
considerable degree. He
says in a letter to Hans
Starkenbourg in 1894:

“Political, juridical,
philosophical, religious,
literary, artistic, etc.,

development is based on economic development. But all these react upon one another and also upon the economic base. It is not that the economic position is the *cause and alone active*, while everything else only has a passive effect. There is, rather, interaction on the basis of the economic necessity, which *ultimately* always asserts itself. . . . Men make their history themselves, only in given surroundings which condition it and on the basis of actual relations already existing, among

which the economic relations, however much they may be influenced by the other political and ideological ones, are still ultimately the decisive ones, forming the red thread which runs through them and alone leads to understanding."

[Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Correspondence, 1846-1895 (New York: International Publishers, 1935), pp. 517-18.]

This passage from Engels

sense to express unyielding determination and to boost the morale of the workers. However that may be. Communists throughout the world, and especially since 1917, have taken the inevitability theory very seriously. Lenin believed in it and Soviet leaders, particularly Nikita Khrushchev, have repeatedly stressed it in their public pronouncements.

Social scientists, whether Marxist or otherwise, may be able to discern clear trends in the realm of economic, political and

the course of human affairs. We must always remain indebted to Marx for having so forcefully called this fact to the attention of mankind. The real question is how far it is reasonable to push an economic interpretation of history. Perhaps both Marxists and non-Marxists will eventually be able to agree that economic factors are the *most* important in historical causation, but by no means all-determining.

We must regard with skepticism any theory of history that relies on *unicausal* or monistic

explanation. In my judgment, allowance must be made, not only for the pervasive phenomena of chance and freedom of choice, but also for events of decisive importance that do not belong in the category of economics. Such was the sudden death of President Roosevelt in April 1945 owing to physical factors. That untoward occurrence had distressing and far-reaching effects on the domestic and foreign policies of the American Government.

In addition, it has been

consequences may be.

Most pertinent here are the remarks made by Brand Blanshard, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Yale University, concerning both Marxist and Freudian theories of motivation:

“There are such things after all as native intelligence and the pressure of evidence, and neither singly nor in combination are they the functions of anything economic. Indeed, as has often been pointed out, the very success of Marx or Freud in showing his theory

true would render the theory itself incredible. If all philosophical theories are produced not by the pressure of evidence, but by irrelevant pushes and pulls, this theory itself must be so produced, and then why believe it? On the other hand, if the theory has been arrived at under the constraint of logic and facts, then there is no reason why other conclusions should not be arrived at in the same way, and the theory fails again.

“It may be suggested that the theory of Freud is more

plausible than that of Marx because desire is more intimately hound up with thought than are economic conditions. Agreed. But the Freudian theory would hold only if the course of thought were under the complete control of some desire other than the desire for truth itself. Now the desire for truth may be more commonly diverted from its aim by these other desires than was realized before Freud wrote. But that intelligence never succeeds in following an argument where it leads, that it is

invariably put off the scent by the seductions of some irrelevant desire seems to me false, and self-evidently false. And if it is, we must admit that intellectual insight is an independent factor which is neither an economic nor a psychological puppet.”

[Brand Blanshard, "Can the Philosopher Influence Social Change?" *Journal of Philosophy* (Nov. 25, 1954), p. 745, See also Prof. Blanshard's "Reflections on Economic

Determinism,” Journal of Philosophy (March 31, 1966), and the inadequate reply, “Blanshard's Reduction of Marxism,” by Dr. Ivan Babic of the University of Zagreb, Journal of Philosophy (Dec. 8, 1966).]

John Dewey, interpreting the thought of another leading philosopher, Morris R. Cohen, has generalized the principle of contingency for the scientific enterprise as a whole:

“Science is bound to assume, no matter how far back it goes, a given distribution of material particles for which no reason can be assigned; these are just brutally so and so; moreover, all scientific explanation is selective; laws must limit themselves to a small number of variables; and this fact is identical with recognition that for law (and the sum of laws) facts excluded as irrelevant are contingent. Finally, laws themselves have contingency. We can carry

back laws to a more general law, but that more general law has undemonstrable terms. In fact, the more general the law, the less deducible, by truism, are its terms. Contingency is final because things in the universe have individuality, as well as having relations which are necessary, universal and invariant"

[John Dewey, "A Philosophy of Scientific Method," a review of Morris R. Cohen's Reason and Nature in New Republic (April 29, 1931), p. 307.]

In stating that for law “facts excluded as irrelevant are contingent,” Professor Dewey means that any if-then sequence or relation is operative only within some determinate system and that events taking place outside that system are contingent in relation to the law in question. When Dewey says that “things in the universe have individuality,” he means that individuality, like contingency, is a metaphysical ultimate. Individuality in this sense signifies that every existent

“In the description of causal sequences, we still have to start with and from existences, things that are individually and uniquely just what they are. The fact that we can reduce changes that occur to certain uniformities and regularities does not eliminate this original element of individuality, of preference and bias. On the contrary, the statement of laws presupposes just this capacity. We cannot escape this fact by an attempt to treat each thing as an effect of other things. That merely

pushes individuality back into those other things. Since we have to admit individuality no matter how far we carry the chase, we might as well forego the labor and start with the unescapable fact.

“In short, anything that is has something unique in itself, and this unique something, enters into what it does. Science does not concern itself with the individualities of things. It is concerned with their relations. A law or statement of uniformity like

that of the so-called causal sequence tells us nothing about a thing inherently; it tells us only about an invariant relation sustained in behavior of that thing with that of other things. That this fact implies contingency as an ultimate and irreducible trait of existence is something too complicated to go into here.”

[John Dewey, *Philosophies of Freedom*, in Kallen (ed.) *op. cit.*, pp. 264-65.]

Again, to spell out Dewey's meaning, every entity, including man, has uniform and dependable relations with other entities, but in its individuality also possesses attributes or peculiarities that do not enter into such relations. The French philosopher, Charles B. Renouvier, as interpreted by George Boas, Professor Emeritus of the History of Philosophy at Johns Hopkins University, illuminates the situation:

“Insofar as any being is

unique, to that extent it is undetermined or self-determined. And insofar as it is identical with other beings, to that extent the homogeneity of its class accounts for the regularity of its behavior.”

[George Boas, “Charles Bernard Renouvier,” Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 7, p. 181.]

When the unique attributes of a thing—those attributes that are not homogeneous with the rest of its class—interact with

attained results as certain and successful as the physical sciences. And if every man possesses freedom of choice, the lag in the social sciences becomes even more understandable.

The existence of contingency and individuality goes hand in hand with pluralism—the idea that the universe is a Many—as opposed to monism—the idea that the universe is a One, a vast, unified totality. Traditionally, determinism and fatalism have been bound up with a monistic

same time establishes pluralism as a metaphysical ultimate along with contingency and individuality.

As William James acutely says:

“Things are ‘with’ one another in many ways, but nothing includes everything, or dominates over everything. The word ‘and’ trails along after every sentence. . . . The pluralistic world is thus more like a federal republic than like an empire or a kingdom. . . . Monism, on the other hand,

insists that when you come down to reality as such, to the reality of realities, everything is present to everything else in one vast instantaneous co-implicated completeness—nothing can in any sense, functional or substantial, be really absent from anything else, all things interpenetrate and telescope together in the great total conflux.”

[William James, A Pluralistic Universe (New York: Longmans, Green, 1925), pp. 321-22.]

another in respect to gravity, most of them are totally unrelated at any one time to most others in most ways. On the other hand, no entity is independent of all other entities. Every individual object has relations with other objects; events overlap, tangle with one another, intermesh like the teeth of a cogwheel. Relationships greatly vary. As Dewey puts it:

“Some things are relatively insulated from the influence of other things; some things

are easily invaded by others; some things are fiercely attracted to conjoin their activities with those of others. Experience exhibits every kind of connexion from the most intimate to mere external juxtaposition."

[John Dewey, "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy," in Dewey and Others, Creative Intelligence (New York: Henry Holt, 1917), pp. 15-16.]

A common feature of the classic deterministic

monisms has been the denial or derogation of change and becoming, which are essential elements in a world where contingency and freedom of choice are real. The ancient Greek philosopher, Parmenides, was the first thinker in the West to formulate systematically the idea of all existence

“as a single, timeless and indivisible Being whose perfection is precisely due to its immutability. For every change was conceived as a corruption

unworthy of pure and perfect Being.”

[Capek, *“The Doctrine of Necessity Re-Examined,”* loc. cit., p. 18.]

The great Sphere or One of Parmenides has exercised an immense and pervasive influence on philosophy and theology right down to the present day.

A last-ditch argument against the existence of objective contingency is that if there were an all-knowing mind in the

universe or observing the universe, that mind could predict, from its knowledge of the complete state of affairs throughout the cosmos at any moment, everything that would happen anywhere, including the thoughts and actions of human beings, for all future time. The first philosopher to advance this theory was Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, a German of the seventeenth century.

Leibniz writes:

“That everything is brought forth through an

established destiny is just as certain as three times three is nine. For destiny consists in this, that everything is interconnected as in a chain and will as infallibly happen before it happens, as it infallibly happened after it happens. . . .

Everything proceeds mathematically—that is, infallibly—in the whole wide world, so that if someone could have a sufficient insight into the inner parts of things, and in addition had remembrance and intelligence enough to

consider all the circumstances and to take them into account, he would be a prophet and would see the future in the present as in a mirror.”

[Quoted by Mortimer J. Adler, The Idea of Freedom: A Dialectical Examination of the Conceptions of Freedom (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1958), p. 450.]

Early in the nineteenth century, a French astronomer and mathematician, the

Marquis de Laplace, formulated Leibniz's idea more precisely:

“An intelligent being who, at a given instant, knew all the forces animating nature and the relative position of the beings within it, would, if his intelligence were sufficiently capacious to understand these data, include in a single formula the movements of the largest bodies of the universe and those of its slightest atoms. Nothing would be uncertain to him; the future as well as the

past would be present to his eyes.”

[Pierre Simon Laplace, Oeuvres Completes de Laplace (Paris: Government of France, 1886), Vol. 7, pg 6.]

The all-knowing Laplacean mind would be able to reconstruct the past of the universe by working backwards from effects to causes.

[Theoretically, “determinism read backwards is true—that is, the present does fully

reject credence in the omniscient, prescient gods of traditional supernaturalism.

A strange fatalistic note creeps into some forms of Christianity that are not, like Calvinism, deterministic in essence. Thus God with overtones of determinism appears in the well-known Protestant burial service that quotes from the Book of Job: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." And sometimes death notices begin: "Whereas God in his infinite wisdom has taken

our dearly beloved. . . .” Without doubt some people are consoled by thinking that the loss of a loved one has been decreed, for some inscrutable reason, by a deterministic Divine Providence.

God as First Cause is another conception that paves the way for cosmic determinism. For in that mode he provides the one, mighty, initiating cause from which automatically flow all subsequent causes and effects. An altogether material phenomenon as First Cause would have the same necessitarian result.

does prove objectively the existence of contingency. These particles, he argues, display random fluctuations in their behavior. He then states:

“There is no intervention of an observer in the case of radioactive explosions which occur spontaneously and independently of any extranuclear factors. The function of the human observer here is passive; it is reduced to counting particles in a certain interval of time and measuring their energy

after their emergence from the nucleus. It is true that even this apparently passive role means an intervention in the observed physical process; thus the counting of the emitted particles is impossible without using a spinthariscopes or Geiger counter, and to these observational procedures everything which Heisenberg stated in his original formulation of the principle applies. But this intervention does obviously occur after the event, that is, after the radioactive

explosion has taken place. Thus the uncertainty of the radioactive disintegrations is independent of the limitations of human experimental technique; the term 'indeterminacy' or 'contingency' is far more appropriate and much less misleading than 'uncertainty.'

[Capek, *The Philosophical Impact of Contemporary Physics*, op. cit., p. 311.]

Equally relevant for indicating that contingency exists in the nature of

things is that

“the physicists themselves suggest that even the patent regularities are a statistical mass phenomenon summing up vast numbers of more or less lawless atomic events.”

[Donald C. Williams, “Free Will or Freedom of the Will,” Encyclopedia Americana, 1957, Vol. XII, p. 46.]

Those events taken singly do not fit into any fixed pattern. It may be added that science’s increasing

probable?

The scientific study of probability has recently extended to games of chance. Says Alfred Lande, Professor of Physics at Ohio State University:

“... determinism does not and never will make sense, in particular when applied to those random-like situations we know from games of chance. The question is, of course, whether there are true games of chance, i.e., random-like situations that are irreducible to

concealed causes in principle. In this argument about principles it makes little difference whether the random-like situations are those encountered in atomic experiments, in dice games, or in the games insurance companies play with their clients.”

[Alfred Lande, “The Case for Indeterminism,” in Sidney Hook (ed.) *Determinism and Freedom in the Age of Modern Science* (New York: New York University Press, 1958),

p. 70.]

Professor Lande cites experiments with a game of balls dropped through a chute onto a sharp or slightly rounded knife edge. Almost all the balls will fall to the right or left of the knife in accordance with the mechanically set angle of the aim.

“Experience shows, however, that between right- and left-hand aim there is always a small but finite range Δa of aim within which an experimentally

adjusted angle α leads neither to all balls dropping to the right nor to all balls dropping to the left but rather to both r-and l-balls occurring at a certain frequency ratio. The latter varies from 100:0 to 0:100 when the aim is shifted from the right to the left of the small range Δa .”

[Ibid.]

Lande concludes that this fluctuation of the balls cannot be properly explained on a deterministic basis and that such games of chance

little or no attention to the question of chance or contingency. In two valuable symposia published in 1966—*Freedom and Determinism*, edited by Professor Keith Lehrer, and *Free Will and Determinism*, edited by Dr. Bernard Berofsky—there is virtually no discussion of contingency. Since freedom of choice is obviously an impossibility unless contingency objectively exists in Nature, it seems to me that these two books are lacking in depth.]

PART TWO

4: The Role of Potentiality and Deliberation

According to the determinist analysis, when a man is choosing between two or more alternatives, his final choice is all settled in advance, completely necessitated by the course of Nature from aeons past. In short, for the determinist, alternatives and potentiality are, like contingency, mere illusions in the human mind; not only everything that happens is fated to occur, but everything that does

The late Professor Frederick J. E. Woodhridge, one of Columbia University's most distinguished philosophers, specifies what those "impinging forces" accomplish:

"We may recognize at once that the bare potential contains within itself no elements which can lead to its own realization. To be more than a mere possibility, something else must supervene. The whole of existence at any moment faces the future, therefore,

with untold possibilities. Each of them, if started on the road toward realization, has its path determined, but from the point of view of potentiality, all are equally possible. The determined path presents us with all the elements of a necessary connection, but we look in vain for such connection when we seek among the untold possibilities the one which is in effect to be.

“Something new must add itself, must emerge, as it were, out of non-existence into being. An arbitrary point of departure must

arise, and when once it has arisen, the movement proceeds with definiteness. It is thus, whether we like it or not, that the doctrine of chance originates. To adopt again the argument of Aristotle, the elimination of chance is the elimination of the potential. For if there had always existed the elements necessary to transform the potential, it would have always been transformed, and so motion and alteration could have no place in the scheme of things.”

[Frederick J. E.

Woodbridge, Nature and Mind (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), p. 52.]

Professor Lamprecht outlines the implications of potentiality for freedom of choice:

“The plural potentialities of nature are the significant basis of human choice. It is insufficient to argue that because things are as they are they will be as they will be. Rather, because things are as they are, an agent who imaginatively foresees

the diverse potentialities of things may choose freely within given limits. Freedom is never total—it is not freedom from the world. But it is genuine—it is freedom within the world. There is at least no supernatural agency introduced into a mechanical nature in order to give man freedom at the expense of nature's laws.”

[Lamprecht, The Metaphysics of Naturalism, op. cit., pp. 192-193.]

“Stones, plants, even most

animals are not free. They react only to the actuality that forces itself upon them with insistent pressure. Man is supreme among the products of nature just because in imagination disciplined by stem experience, he can look through the actual to the potential, can respond to the actual in the light of the potential, *can choose between the contingent factors of nature*. Freedom is perhaps the latest development of a basic trait of nature; it is latest in time but supreme in importance.

It is late because its appearance is consequent to the prior development of memory, imagination, knowledge. But even this latest development was latent in nature from the start, waiting for such a creature as man to enter through its possession into mastery over the rest of nature. Freedom is, then, the exploitation of nature's contingency.”

[Ibid., p. 193.]

[Italics mine—C. L.]

Let us consider the various potentialities for

“Whatever is realized in any one occasion of experience necessarily excludes the unbounded welter of contrary possibilities. There are always ‘others’ which might have been and are not.”

[Alfred N. Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas (New York: Macmillan, 1933), p. 356.]

Many a time during pleasant summers among the offshore islands of Maine my family and I have discussed plans to go on an all-day outing. Would it be

choice in our decision where to go.

Other potentialities were also present for an all-day excursion: a trip southward by motorboat to visit Monhegan Island, a trip north to Mt. Desert Island to explore Acadia National Park, and a long sail around the large island of Vinalhaven. A man is not necessarily aware of *all* existing alternatives when he is deliberating about a choice; and the multiple possibilities that Nature is continually offering us exist concretely whether or not we give them conscious

consideration.

It is the ever plural potentialities in the world and human life that give us the opportunity to make choices that count among alternatives that are real. However, possibilities, like human choices, are limited in scope. The healthiest acorn is not capable of growing into an apple tree; the most versatile horse does not have the ability, except in fairy tales, to fly through the air. The respective natures of every event, object and creature set deterministic bounds to their potentialities.

self-service elevator. [*Cf. pp. 128-29.*] In general, however, men do not have to take action instantly when faced with a problem. They are not required, like inanimate agents, to react in a speedy stimulus-response manner. They have time to glimpse imaginatively the various potentialities in the situation, to propose to themselves different hypothetical solutions and to work out in thought the logical consequences of each one.

It is this sort of deliberation

“which decisively contrasts intelligent conduct or behavior with reflex, instinctive and habitual conduct or behavior—delayed reaction with immediate reaction.”

[George H. Mead, Mind, Self and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), p. 98.]

In short, the enterprise of thinking, with its manipulation of ideas that symbolize things and events, enables human

Dewey's words:

“Preferential action in the sense of selective behavior is a universal trait of all things, atoms and molecules as well as plants, animals and man. Existences, universally as far as we can tell, are cold and indifferent in the presence of some things and react energetically in either a positive or negative way to other things. These ‘preferences’ or differential responses of behavior, are due to their own constitution; they ‘express’

the nature of the things in question. . . .

“We may say that a stone has its preferential selections set by a relatively fixed, a rigidly set, structure and that no anticipation of the results of acting one way or another enter into the matter. The reverse is true of human action. In so far as a variable life-history and intelligent insight and foresight enter into it, choice signifies a capacity for deliberately changing preferences. . . . The fact that all things show bias, preference or selectivity of

reaction, while not itself freedom, is an indispensable condition of any human freedom.”

[Dewey, “*Philosophies of Freedom*,” *op. cit.*, pp. 240, 243, 266.]

Analyzing in depth the intellectual process which leads to a decision, we find that a man ordinarily employs *general* ideas or “universals” as they are called in philosophy. It is elementary that each general concept covers a number of particulars. Thus under the broad

classification of *flower* there are hundreds of varieties. And if I wish to send my mother some flowers for her birthday, I can select from a number of possibilities at my neighborhood florist's. Deliberating in terms of general ideas proceeds on the basis that potentiality is real.

Professor Hartshorne develops the implications here:

“. . . our very power to form general conceptions (in a sense in which these are

beyond the reach of the other animals) is the same as our being not determined by irresistible impulse, habit or antecedent character, to but one mode of acting in a given case. The openness to alternatives, the flexibility, of our response is the behavioristic aspect of our knowledge of the universal, as that which can be indifferently instanced by this particular or by that. Such instancing, by its very meaning, must have wide ranges of freedom. Freedom in the

indeterministic sense is thus inherent in rational understanding as such, understanding through universals."

[Charles Hartshorne, The Logic of Perfection and Other Essays in Neoclassical Metaphysics (La Salle, III.: Open Court, 1962), p. 170.]

Hartshorne continues:

“Universals cannot imply their instances, so that if there are universals there are non-deterministic

relations between them and their instances. The universal is essentially an indecision between its instances; to say universals are real is to say indecision is real. A universal is ... a 'determinable,' not a 'determinate.' 'Color' may be a red; it may be a green; it need not be either. Determinism finds no place for 'may be's'; hence it must deny universals altogether. This is a perfect refutation of determinism, for if a law is not a universal, what is it?"

[Hartshorne, Beyond

someone else who answers at the number called. This general formula, however, does not indicate what number or numbers you or anyone else will call. Thousands, even millions, of different numbers can be dialed, and to the ends of the earth. All of them are possible instances of the law regulating phone calls. The thinking of a student on entering college can serve as an illustration of Hartshorne's analysis of universals. "A good college education" is the general conception, the universal, in the student's mind as he

". . adequate evidence for the belief that we have free will is the fact that we deliberate about future actions. When we deliberate about whether or not we shall perform some future action, we must be convinced that the action in question is in our power, that is, we must be convinced that it is up to us whether or not we shall perform the action. In order to deliberate about whether or not we shall perform some future action we must be convinced that we can choose to perform the

action and also that we can choose not to perform it, for we cannot seriously deliberate about whether or not we shall perform an action unless we believe that we can choose whether or not we shall perform it.”

[Keith Lehrer, “Can We Know that We Have Free Will by Introspection?” Journal of Philosophy (March 1, 1960), p. 145.]

Of course free choice results in wrong decisions as well as right, in furthering the bad as well

as the good, in lying as well as in telling the truth. Furthermore, in the process of studying the implications of different alternatives,

“... no one can foresee all consequences because no one can be aware of all the conditions that enter into their production. Every person builds better or worse than he knows.”

[Dewey, “*Philosophies of Freedom*,” *op. cit.*, p. 256.]

It is difficult, if not

for bridge, baseball, golf, tennis and croquet—indeed, for all competitive games and sports.

Economic, political and social conditions are of course very important in limiting the range of human freedom. Yet however circumscribing boundaries of this kind may be in a given situation, some leeway invariably remains for free choice. Even when confronted by a Hobson's choice, in which you must take what is offered or nothing, you have the freedom to choose the nothing. Dr. Viktor

Frankl comments:

“Certainly man is free, but he is not floating freely in airless space. He is always surrounded by a host of restrictions. These

restrictions, however, are the jumping-off points for his freedom. Freedom

presupposes restrictions, is contingent upon

restrictions. . . . The ground on which a man walks is always being transcended in the process of walking, and serves as ground only to the extent that it is transcended, that it

provides a springboard.”

[Frankl, op. cit., p. 86.]

Under an iron dictatorship the average citizen's range of organizational activities and free speech is far less than in a democracy. But regardless of the sort of political system prevailing in a country, there is one exceedingly significant moral choice a man can always make. He can defy the government. He can say, “No, I will not keep silent.

No, I will not obey.” He can

with set purpose choose the path to a concentration camp or even to death for the sake of his principles. Throughout history numberless individuals, remembered and unremembered, have given up their lives rather than give up their convictions. Some have even committed suicide, deliberately and rationally, as their ultimate protest against ruthless and bloody tyranny.

Dr. Frankl survived three years of imprisonment at Auschwitz and other Nazi extermination centers and describes his experiences in

a soul-searing book, *Man's Search for Meaning*. He writes:

“We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof *that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given circumstances, to choose*

one's own way.

“And there were always choices to make. Every day, every hour, offered the opportunity to make a decision, a decision which determined whether you would or would not submit to those powers which threatened to rob you of your very self, your inner freedom; which determined whether or not you would become the plaything of circumstance, renouncing freedom and dignity to become molded into the form of the typical inmate. .

. .

“In the final analysis it becomes clear that the sort of person the prisoner became was the result of an inner decision, and not the result of camp influences alone. Fundamentally, therefore, any man can, even under such *circumstances, decide what shall become of him—mentally and spiritually. He may retain his human dignity even in a concentration camp. Dostoievsky said once, ‘There is only one thing that I dread: not to be worthy of my sufferings.’ These words*

frequently came to mind after I became acquainted with those martyrs whose behavior in camp, whose suffering and death, bore witness to the fact that the last inner freedom cannot be lost."

[Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1959), pp. 104-05.]

[Italics mine—C. L.]

Some hard-core determinists have adopted the theory of

epiphenomenalism, which holds that consciousness, thought and psychological states in general are mere byproducts of neural processes in the brain and possess no causal or practical efficacy. From this standpoint man's consciousness plays the role of a passive spectator watching, enjoying, suffering the unfolding of inescapable destiny.

“The view of psychological states as ‘epiphenomena’— events accompanying but not

making any difference to physiological processes—is difficult to reconcile with evolutionary theory. For such epiphenomenal states would be useless to the organisms which manifested them and should therefore have atrophied and disappeared long ago, instead of increasing in number and complexity as they clearly have.”

[Mabbott, op. cit., p. 747.]

Thus, epiphenomenalism not only makes a mystery

and his fellow determinists grant that freedom for human beings is far wider in scope than for any other organic species, they ascribe to man no greater intrinsic autonomy than to a toad, a turtle or a turtle-dove.

Relevant here is a statement by the late Jerome Frank, the brilliant lawyer and Federal judge, in his book *Fate and Freedom*:

“Some determinists seek to avoid the problem of human freedom by this

ingenious argument: Often, they say, a man's external surroundings present him with several real alternative courses of conduct; those surroundings themselves do not constrain him to choose any particular one of those alternatives; his objectives and motives, the products of his personality—the kind of person he is—determine his choice; in that sense he is free, unconstrained, because he acts of his own volition within the range of the external alternatives open to him. But this

argument glosses over the basic issue. For, according to determinists, rigid causation, with never the tiniest escape from it, operated at every second in the development of the man's personality, shaping inexorably his objectives, his motives, his volition; his choice merely seems real to him because, at the instant of decision, he is ignorant of the past and present facts which render his decision compulsory."

[Frank, op. cit., pp. 321-22.]

Judge Frank goes on to say that when the determinists assert that the individual's self or personality plays an important part in a decision

“they are being disingenuous. For, if their causality doctrine is sound, the man is what he is at the moment of decision because his immediately preceding past, itself inflexibly determined, so dictated; a similar inflexible dictation directed his heredity ... as well as his

environment and the past of that environment. . . . As, then, according to their doctrine, the man cannot help choosing exactly as he does, the determinists' picture of the freedom of human choice is the picture of an illusion."

[Ibid., p. 322.]

The orthodox determinist constantly proclaims that science and its methods strongly support his viewpoint. Professor Abraham Wolf, late of the University of London, exposes this contention:

“In a world of thorough-going determinism, in which all things were mechanically or quasi-mechanically predetermined, in which even men of science were not free to think as they thought fit in the light of the evidence before them, how could science lay any claim to truth, universally valid truth? There could be nothing but individual opinion, the opinion of each individual being as necessary, and probably as far from the truth, as that of

any other. It may be, of course, that our world is such a world. But in such a world there could be no science. And to insist upon maintaining such a deterministic view of the world in the name, and on behalf of, science, is simply to stultify oneself."

[Abraham Wolf,
"Free-Will,"
*Encyclopaedia
Britannica* (Fourteenth
Ed., 1929), Vol. 9, p.
747.]

Morris Ginsberg,
Professor Emeritus of

Sociology at the London School of Economics, further develops this line of thought, declaring that determinism, if true, would nullify scientific method:

“If it be maintained that a man's judgments are themselves completely determined, that he cannot help making the judgments he makes, the answer is that this makes nonsense of all knowledge. ... If all judgments were causally necessitated, they would all be on the same level and it would be impossible to

distinguish some as true and others as false. Sense and nonsense would all be equally necessitated. The whole notion of going by the evidence would lose all its meaning, if in forming a judgment we were completely unable to resist the violence of present desire, the effects of past habits, the persistence of ancient prejudices or the forces of the unconscious.”

[Quoted by Adler, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 454.]

Professor Alburey Castell
of the College of Wooster

carries on the argument:

“Are we to say that a mental process is trustworthy simply because each stage is causally necessitated by what precedes it? If so, the processes of a sick or crazed or over-fatigued mind are as trustworthy as the processes of a healthy, alert, sensitized mind, since in both cases (the claim is) each stage is causally necessitated by what precedes it. But if the processes of a sane mind are no more trustworthy than the processes of an

insane mind, why do we trust the man who reasons in support of the theory that no one ever could do other than he does do? His reasoning processes are no more binding than a series of hiccoughs.”

[Quoted, ibid., p. 456.]

Following through the implications of Professor Castell's statement, we see that determinism is logically self-defeating. For when the determinist propounds his theory, argues insistently in its favor and rebuts the free

choice doctrine, he is all the while implicitly affirming that he has responsibly adopted his thesis and that thus he has chosen freely between true and false. If, as Professor Paul Weiss of Yale University shows, the determinist

“denies that he freely considers and responsibly adopts his position, he denies that he has a view that opposes others; his view is then acknowledged to be but one verbal fact among a multitude, no better or worse, no more or

less important, than any other.”

[Paul Weiss, Nature and Man (New York: Holt, 1947), p. 26.]

Professor Weiss lays it on the line:

"The statement that this was a deterministic world and the statement that it was not would, for a comprehensive determinism, be on a level, equally true and equally false, and therefore—since truth and falsehood are mutually exclusive—really

incapable of either truth or falsehood. ... A

deterministic world is one in which the deterministic thesis could not be offered as true because such a world allows no place for beings who are responsible for asserting truths.”

[Ibid., pp. 24,26.]

When an individual is reasoning his way to the solution of a problem, to the truth as he sees it, he continually discards the ideas he thinks false and accepts those he deems true. Freedom of choice

predominates in both the rejection and acceptance of ideas; and we see again that this freedom is essential to the search for and discovery of the truth.

An expert in psychotherapy, Professor Carl A. Rogers, presents a trenchant critique of those who interpret science as proving determinism. He offers two main points:

“1. In any scientific endeavor—whether ‘pure’ or applied science—there is a prior personal subjective choice of the

purpose or value which that scientific work is perceived as serving.

“2. This subjective value choice which brings the scientific endeavor into being must always lie outside of that endeavor, and can never become a part of the science involved in that endeavor. . . .

“We must recall that science itself, and each specific scientific endeavor, each change of course in a scientific research, each interpretation of the meaning of a scientific finding and each decision

as to how the finding shall be applied, rests upon a personal subjective choice. ... A personal subjective choice made by man sets in motion the operations of science, which in time proclaims that there can be no such thing as a personal subjective choice.”

[Carl R. Rogers, On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), pp. 391-92.]

When a man carefully deliberates about a

reasoning means and what reliance on reason entails.

Professor Emeritus of Philosophy Raphael Demos of Harvard University elucidates:

“I submit that necessitation by reason is no less determination than necessitation by appetite. . .

. Reason recognizes the moral law and respects it; appetite aims at pleasure.

Yet, in fact, moral choice is a choice between reason and appetite. By identifying the self with reason, both Plato and Kant make

freedom impossible, no less than Hume and John Stuart Mill do, who identify the self with appetite. To repeat—the situation of ethical choice is one in which the agent decides whether to follow reason or desire. . . .”

[*Raphael Demos, “Human Freedom—Negative and Positive,” in Ruth Nanda Anshen (ed.) Freedom: Its Meaning (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1910), pp. 600-01.*]

When analyzing *ex post*

facto why a man has chosen alternative *a* instead of alternative *b*, the determinist may point to the reasons and say, “See, those reasons necessitated the person’s choice and no other course was possible.” Professor F. C. S. Schiller, the Oxford don, exposes this fallacy when he says:

“The alternative, had it been adopted, would have seemed equally intelligible, just because it was such as to be really entertained by the agent under the circumstances, and as

naturally rooted in them.”

[F. C. S. Schiller,
Studies in Humanism
(London: Macmillan,
1912), p. 404.]

And Schiller asks,

“Does it not follow . . . that
whichever of the
alternatives is chosen, it will
appear to be rationally
connected with the
antecedent
circumstances?”

[*Ibid.*]

The answer of course is
Yes.

Determinists are prone to seize upon this fact as a confirmation of their position. But it demonstrates just the opposite, namely, that we always have a plurality of intelligible possibilities from which we can select. This is true even if only two decisions—to do or not to do something—are relevant. After the event, the actual choice—which is a contingent happening—can to a great extent be rationally explained, just as can contingent conjunctions and events in Nature at large. This is why

psychiatrists and psychoanalysts are quite successful in satisfactorily relating a patient's present to his past, but much less successful in predicting his future behavior from his present behavior.

[See Roberto Zavalloni, Self-Determination: The Psychology of Personal Freedom (Chicago: Forum Books, 1962), p. 227.]

The fundamental mistake of the determinist in his analysis of thinking and choosing is to treat them primarily as items in the *history* of an individual, to

describe these activities as if they were fully completed episodes of the departed past instead of functions of the living present. As Henri Bergson points out, the determinist reaches his conclusion by analyzing the phenomenon of human choice *as already made, not as in the making*.

Professor Weiss sums up this phase of our argument:

“The contention that men are determined and the contention that they are free seem opposed. They are not. Determinism applies to

what has happened when all the conditions are already present and fulfilled. Freedom applies to what is happening and will happen; it concerns the creation of new conditions and thus of consequences that until then have not been necessitated.”

[Paul Weiss, “Common Sense and Beyond,” in Hook (ed.) op. cit., p. 220.]

5: Causation and Free Choice

A potent reason for the widespread acceptance of the determinist thesis is a rather common misunderstanding of the operation of cause and effect. Many individuals, including scientists and philosophers, look upon the present as merely the effect of antecedent causes and forget that the present in its multitudinous forms is itself an active cause, the spearhead of all existence and activity, the great

forward thrust of universal being. The past does not create the present; it is always the activity of some immediate present that produces the past, working upon it, transforming it or conserving what has been built by *former* presents that have become part of the past. The present alone exists and has efficacy; the past is efficacious only as embodied in the substance or structure of some present event or object. As the dynamic present forges ahead, it leaves its past behind it, making a trail as it were, as a skier gliding

existence, maintains other patterns and destroys still others.

Professor Capek gets to the heart of the matter when, speaking of

“a really growing world with genuine novelties emerging from past antecedents,”

he states:

“In such a growing world every present event is undoubtedly caused, though not necessitated, by its own past. For, as long as it is not yet present, its

specific character remains uncertain for one simple reason: that it is only its presentness which creates its specificity, i.e., brings an end to its uncertainty by eliminating all other possible features incompatible with it. Thus every present event is by its own essence *an act of selection* ending the hesitation of reality between various possibilities. The terms 'selection' and 'hesitation' appear to be metaphorical and even anthropomorphic at first glance; in truth they

express nothing but the ambiguous character of the unrealized future as well as its subsequent concrete realization. They describe complementary aspects of every temporal process: its indeterminacy and its creative character.”

[Capek, “The Doctrine of Necessity Re-Examined,” loc. cit., pp. 50-51.]

Active, thinking, choosing men, together with those natural forces under their control, are an unceasing *wave of the present*. This

creative present, however conditioned and restricted by the effects of previous presents, possesses genuine initiative; as it moves forward, it pushes into the past the transformations it makes in the malleable substance of the already existent. Professor Woodbridge clarifies the issue:

“The past is not the cause or beginning of the present, but the effect and result of history; so that every historical thing leaves, as it were, its past behind it as

the record of its life in time.

. . . Everything that grows or changes manufactures a past by realizing a future. . .

. Each career is the producer, but not the product of its past.”

[Frederick J. E. Woodbridge, The Purpose of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), pp. 5, 40, 47.]

It is easy to become confused about the meaning of past and future. Since neither of them exist in the present, they are

spatialization of time a central tenet:

“Whatever happens is . . . conceived to be the effect of what has already happened, rather than the active conservation and working over of what has already happened. The past is made the cause and producer of the present, so that the state of the world at any moment is only the result or outcome of what it was in the preceding moment. Today is thought to be the effect of yesterday and the cause of tomorrow,

and is thus but a transition from one day to another. Time-processes are thus robbed of any genuine activity or productivity, and time itself is made to be nothing but the sequential order in which events occur. . . .

“Time is not like a line already drawn. It is more like a line in the drawing. You take the pencil and the line is left behind it as the pencil moves. New points are being constantly added to what has gone before. The line is being manufactured. . . . The line,

instead of growing into the future, grows into the past—continually as more and more of it is drawn.”

[Ibid., pp. 35-36, 38-39.]

[Italics mine—C. L.]

We now turn to the distinction, crucial for our discussion, between the existing subject matter—what Aristotle called the material cause—and the agent or force that acts upon it—what Aristotle called the *efficient cause*.

[In his philosophy

Aristotle distinguished four different kinds of cause. Efficient cause in his terminology has come to mean plain cause in modern usage.]

To quote Professor Lamprecht again:

“Subject-matter and agency are both actualities of the present. But their roles are different. The former is that which is acted upon; the latter is that which acts. That which is acted upon may well also be agent, because the interactions of

nature are highly complicated. And that which acts may also be subject-matter for some other agent. We cannot, therefore, pick out any actuality of the present and regard it as either subject-matter or as agent in any absolute sense. . . .

“A physician who heals is agent and his patient is subject-matter, even though, simultaneously with the healing activity of the physician, the patient also acts in various ways upon the physician. The wind is agent and the

bending elm is
subject-matter, even
though, simultaneously
with the impact of the wind
on the tree, the elm diverts
the wind somewhat from
the course it would, in the
absence of the elm at just
that spot, have taken. But
the physician and the wind,
in their roles as agents, are
not subject-matter; and the
patient and the elm, in their
roles as subject-matter, are
not agents. The distinction
between subject-matter
and agent is absolute, even
if the actualities to which
the distinction can be

applied are complexly interrelated and continually changing in those interrelations.”

[Lamprecht, The Metaphysics of Naturalism, op. cit., pp. 149-50.]

This distinction holds for a human agent putting into effect a present choice that affects his own body as subject matter or his own mind (as it exists up to that point) as subject matter. In the thought process it is always the mind functioning in the

“What is meant by saying that my choice of which way to walk home after the lecture is ambiguous and a matter of chance as far as the present moment is concerned? It means that both Divinity Avenue and Oxford Street are called; but that only one, and that one either one, shall be chosen.”

[James, “The Dilemma of Determinism,” op. cit., p. 155.]

Contingency is operative in the choice James is going

situation.

The example I have just given is a case of deciding to do something in advance and then doing it at the set time and place. This kind of decision enables me to change my mind before I make the final commitment of embodying the choice in action. But in many cases of free choice, perhaps the less important ones on the whole, the deciding and the acting are simultaneous. In driving my car to the movie theatre, I overtake a slow-moving auto. It is dark and I flash my bright lights to show the other

opportunities take the form of plural and protean potentialities. Both determinism and contingency can wreak havoc in human life; yet both can be tamed and put to excellent use by free choice combined with knowledge.

Dewey defines the situation:

“In a world which was completely tight and exact in all its constituents, there would be no room for freedom. Contingency while it gives room does not fill

that room. Freedom is an actuality when the recognition of relations, the stable element, is combined with the uncertain element, in the knowledge which makes foresight possible and secures intentional preparation for probable consequences. We are free in the degree in which we act knowing what we are about.”

[John Dewey, The Quest for Certainty (New York: Minton, Balch, 1929), pp. 249-50.]

“Not all causes are exclusively ‘push-of-energy’ events, though all may well involve the expenditure of energy. In human life, many causes are foreseeings of the future consequences, natural structures understood. . . . Such foreseeings can enter in to impinge upon and modify other causal series; for causation being thus pluralistic, it is always possible in any particular case to add new determinations.”

[Randall in Lamont

practically infinite probability, be an explosion; but it does not follow, and indeterminism denies, that the exact details of the explosion, the behavior of each atom and particle, will be the only possible ones (in principle, uniquely predictable) under the circumstances. . .

“Our question, then, is whether causes or conditions determine happenings absolutely, or whether they merely limit more or less sharply what can happen. ‘More or less

sharply will perhaps seem hopelessly vague. However, one may state the indeterminist or relativist view more subtly, as follows: events are always to an appropriate degree determined by their causal antecedents. And what is 'an appropriate degree'? I think we can give at least a rough answer to this question. A human being, in full possession of normal intelligence, surveying wide alternatives of action under general conceptions whose very meaning is that they admit highly divergent

possible instances, must dispose of a wider range of possible reactions to a given situation than there is reason to attribute to a molecule reacting to its situation. . . . Inanimate nature involves the least scope of alternatives—and here the ‘more or less determined’ means ‘more’; man involves the widest scope—and here it means very much ‘less.’ Thus we need not make man an arbitrary exception to the general principles of nature; he is but the intensive case of the

general principles of creative action, of which causality is an aspect.”

[Hartshorne, The Logic of Perfection, op. cit., pp. 162-64.]

Hartshorne’s position that a certain looseness can be discerned in the causal joints of the cosmos is also that of Professor Capek:

“The present, though co-determined by the past, nevertheless contains an element of irreducible novelty. The individuality of a present event, or better,

its presentness would be irremediably destroyed without this double feature of novelty and its dynamic cohesion with the anterior phases. ... As far as the future is concerned, it is the future and not a disguised or hidden present as in the necessitarian scheme; it will arise, it is not present. But because it will not emerge 'ex nihilo,' but out of a particular present state, its general direction is outlined and thus it possesses some predictable features, the more predictable, the

larger the statistical
complexes of the
elementary events
considered.”

*[Capek, ‘The Doctrine
of Necessity
Re-Examined,’ loc. cit.,
p. 49.]*

Continuing with this
thought, Capek says:

“... we see why
contingentism can be
called a relative
determinism: the future is
determined, but only in its
general character, never in
its actual details. It is this

general orientation of each present moment that contemporary physics grasps in the form of probabilistic laws.”

[Milic Capek, “Toward a Widening of the Notion of Causality,” Diogenes (Winter, 1959), p. 88.]

[Cf. pp. 50-51, 94.]

The upshot of these various observations is that there is no uncaused cause which is initiated every time an individual exercises his power of choice. For a man's

energies function as an unbroken continuum of cause and effect. What happens is that one component of those energies, the conscious self or agent, directs them into this channel or that in accordance with his reasoned choices. At the same time

“The decider of a present issue is not simply identical with the self which resolved a previous issue, but is a new decider.”

[Hartshorne, The Logic of Perfection, op.

cit., p. 186.]

My new self of the immediate present only becomes completely determinate as I put into effect my chosen act. My choices, as they are actualized, function as both contingent causes and free causes. Yes, I—a thinking, dynamic, choosing agent—can be and frequently am *the free cause* of my own actions.

The idea I am outlining here is sometimes known as *self-determination*. It was first clearly presented

by the Greek philosopher Carneades, head of Plato's Academy at Athens in the second century B.C.; and was developed in some detail by Thomas Reid, Scottish philosopher of the eighteenth century and founder of the so-called Common Sense School. As I interpret self-determination, it means that when a man is acting as agent and not as passive subject matter for some other agent, he is the subjective source of his own behavior. Thus he is the free, present chooser and cause of his own

actions. This theory holds that antecedent causes (the past) limit a person's behavior, but that the governing factor in any decision is the self exercising immediate causal initiative and functioning as a free agent always affected by the external world, yet not determined by it. As the late Professor Wm. Pepperell Montague of Columbia University puts it, we human beings possess the freedom

“ . . . at each present

moment to modify and supplement our past by a spontaneous effort not predetermined by that past. . . .”

[Wm. Pepperell Montague, “Free Will and Fate,” *The Personalist* (Spring, 1943), p. 175.]

Every free choice is by its very nature a contingent event, a one-shot agent-cause impinging upon other events.

“Our decisions and intentions are initially

unique in character. They refer to some context, state of affairs, or situation. We wish to deal with some action or thing. *Scientific propositions are general in character, but practical propositions are usually particular*, for they refer to an actual complex of affairs.”

[Paul Kurtz, *Decision and the Condition of Man* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965), p. 241.]

[*Italics mine—C. L.*]

An identifiable human

business, relying on statistics for previous years, predicted that between 460 and 540 individuals in the United States would die in auto accidents during the Memorial Day weekend. The number killed turned out to be 514. But no expert attempted to name in advance any one of the persons who would die in automobile crashes that weekend, and none of those persons expected that his life would suddenly be snuffed out as spring reached its zenith and all nature was in flower.

John Dewey confirms

what I have been saying:

“The present tendency among scientific men is to think of laws as statistical in nature—that is, as statements of an ‘average’ found in the behavior of an enormous number of things, no two of which are exactly alike. If this line of thought be followed out, it implies that the existence of laws or uniformities and regularities among natural phenomena, human acts included, does not in the least exclude the item of choice as a distinctive fact

having its own distinctive consequences. No law does away with individuality of existence, each having its own particular way of operating; for *a law is concerned with relations and hence presupposes the being and operation of individuals.* If choice is found to be a distinctive act, having distinctive consequences, then no appeal to the authority of scientific law can militate in any way against its reality.”

[Dewey, “Philosophies of Freedom,” *op. cit.*, p. 266.]

the initiative and the freedom to be the First Cause and Creator.

We see this confusion concerning subject matter and agency again in the genetic fallacy that views men's actions solely in terms of their causal antecedents. This "container" theory of causation repeats the old mistake of supposing that there must be an inclusive similarity between a cause and its effect, so that all the properties of the effect somehow pre-exist in the cause. But each thing that exists is what it *does* rather

water there emerge new qualities and kinds of behavior quite dissimilar to those of its causal antecedents. Thus every phenomenon possesses a certain irreducible quality—namely, its individuality—that is at least as important a factor in its behavior as the prior causes that bring it into being or the external causes that later affect it. [*Cf. pp. 85-86.*] In the words of Dr. Barrows Dunham:

“Every event is genuinely new and has powers of its

own. Accordingly, in the behavior of every entity there is always something that is not the effect of other causes.”

[Barrows Dunham, Heroes and Heretics (New York: Knopf, 1964), p. 20.]

When the determinists eliminate Aristotle's efficient cause, which I have called the agent-cause, they also unwittingly eliminate time or process. In this way they deprive causation of its dynamic and successive

quality. In other words,

“ . . . a completely necessitarian theory of causation makes time unreal by making the cause-and-effect relation static instead of a process of transition from a temporal antecedent to a temporal consequent.”

[Adler, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 362.]

[*Italics mine—C. L.*]

I remember Professor Woodbridge remarking in his Columbia seminar on metaphysics that if there

were no contingency, and determinism were true, everything would have happened already. [Cf. p. 101.] John Macmurray in his book *The Self as Agent* takes the same view:

“The falsity of determinism lies simply in the dogma that the future is already determinate. But if this were so there would be no future; the future would be already past. ... A determinate future is not a real future. The real future is the indeterminate which is determined in action,

and in being determined becomes the past.”

[John Macmurray, The Self as Agent (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), pp. 135,139.]

What both Woodbridge and Macmurray are saying is that universal determinism by implication abolishes time, so that time comes to a stop and there can be no future. Aristotle made a similar observation in the fourth century B. C.

Returning for a moment to Laplace’s suggestion that an omniscient mind could

foresee the shape—and the content—of things to come for all future time, I think that what must be assumed here is that such a mind would be able to *deduce* all future events from all present events. Thus the necessity envisioned is the timeless necessity of logical deduction, and time is again dropped out of the picture. As Professor Capek states, all forms of determinism commit

“the fallacy of confusing causality with static relation.”

6: Some Practical Problems

6.1. Character and Freedom of Choice

An argument frequently advanced against the free choice thesis is that unless determinism be true, we cannot rely upon relatives, friends or public officials to act dependably in any serious situation or crisis. Only if their deeds flow deterministically from their established characters, the argument continues, can we be sure that they will

make the right decisions and not be utterly capricious. Under this interpretation ethical conduct *demand*s determinism, as does wisdom in the administration of government.

There are several answers to this line of thought. In the first place, a man of good character—intelligent, courageous, public-spirited—can put into effect a wide variety of possible actions, all of which are consistent with his goodness. This multiplicity of actions

fundamentally fine
character.

Suppose a young lawyer who has shown intellectual calibre and moral idealism wishes to further to the best of his ability the movement to obtain full constitutional rights for the Negro people in the United States. Various opportunities exist for the extension of civil rights. He can become an attorney for the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People); he can offer his services to CORE (Congress for Racial Equality); he can join the

His admirable character sets general—and desirable—limits within which his free choice will very probably operate, but it does not deterministically dictate the particular choices he will make within those extensive boundary lines. If we analyze the situation in terms of motives, similar conclusions follow. Human motives are usually quite general:

One desires to obtain a good education, to marry an attractive woman, to be

helpful to one's children, to do a good job in one's chosen work, to seek out recreation on the weekend, to serve one's country. Such motives have a broad sweep and do not predetermine the precise ways in which they will be actualized; "they incline without necessitating."

[My reasoning on pages 139-141 illustrates again that universals or general ideas in a man's mind do not imply which particulars under them are to be actualized.]

William James offers another consideration:

“A favorite argument against free-will is that if it be true, a man’s murderer may as probably be his best friend as his worst enemy, a mother be as likely to strangle as to suckle her first-born, and all of us as ready to jump from fourth-story windows as to go out of front doors, etc. Users of this argument should properly be excluded from debate till they learn what the real

question is. ‘Free-will’ does not say that everything that is physically conceivable is also morally possible. It merely says that of alternatives that really tempt our will more than one is really possible. Of course, the alternatives that do thus tempt our will are vastly fewer than the physical possibilities we can coldly fancy. . . .”

[James, “The Dilemma of Determinism,” op. cit., p. 157.]

In the second place, the determinist argument from

stable character traits represents a static conception of human nature. Professor of Philosophy Wilfrid Sellars, of the University of Pittsburgh, points out:

“To say of a person that his actions are predictable is not always a compliment. Even a person who can be counted on to do what is right is marked down a little when it is said that one can predict exactly what he will do. For to say this implies that he meets situations in routine ways, never thinking

things through afresh or gaining new insight. ... To be a rational being is to be a being who is capable of action that is not in character, and hence cannot be predicted within the framework of the manifest image.”

[Wilfrid Sellars, “Fatalism and Determinism,” in Keith Lehrer (ed.) Freedom and Determinism (New York: Random House, 1966), pp. 146,149.]

The intelligent and high-principled individual

is never wholly satisfied with what he is and what he has accomplished; he is continually striving to improve. Actions not only express character; they also build it, as they reinforce or add to those habit patterns that are the foundation of virtue.

“The essence of ethical reform, and of mere growth even, involves precisely a distinction between the present self as the self, and the past as an erstwhile friend now become like a distant acquaintance, an

awkward relative or even an enemy."

[Hartshorne, Beyond Humanism, op. cit., p. 155.]

Time and again, mediocre, self-seeking or corrupt individuals have been moved by some compelling experience, as St. Paul on the road to Damascus, to reform their lives to a far-reaching degree, to become "twice-born men." Others, who have demonstrated courage and integrity in the past, may start to falter, to

the matter:

“No individual or group will be judged by whether they come up to or fall short of some fixed result, but by the direction in which they are moving. The bad man is the man who no matter how good he has been is beginning to deteriorate, to grow less good. The good man is the man who no matter how morally unworthy he has been is moving to become better.”

*[John Dewey,
Reconstruction in
Philosophy (New York:*

terminology, Warden Austin Farrer of Keble College, Oxford, makes this same point. He considers it vital to distinguish between *antecedent* interest, which inclines us to a certain line of action, and “the *concomitant* interest we take in developing that line of action.” Both these types of interest play an essential part in freely chosen action. Warden Farrer says:

"Antecedent interest, springing out of disposition, must first arise, or . . . the agent will simply not be

there, or on the job. If, when he proceeded to the job, the antecedent interest remained the whole motive of his action, he would be controlled by the dead hand of his own past. The past nothing can alter—not even the gods can do it, says the Greek proverb; a choice determined by antecedent interest would be determined indeed. But a little attention to life as it is lived will suffice to lay the spectre of necessity. Out of antecedent interest is born an interest concomitant with the action it motives:

an interest inseparable from the action itself, and equally flexible. . . . Every voluntary transition we make from one phase of action to another has antecedent interest behind it, and concomitant interest dwelling upon it.”

[Austin Farrer, The Freedom of the Will (New York: Scribners, 1960), p. 232.]

Indubitably, the innate physical and mental qualities with which a man is born are of decisive import in shaping his

character and career. Those qualities arise through the multitudinous genes that are transmitted through the germ cells of each parent. Except in the rare cases of identical twins, no two male-female combinations of genes are the same. During a single act of procreation any one of the 300 to 500 million spermatozoa of the father may unite with the ovum of the mother. Each such possible union must result in a different combination of genes and in a different individual.

A man is not able to

6.2. Forbearance and Ethics

Freedom of choice means that a man is both free to do something and free *not* to do it. I am free to march in a civil rights demonstration and I am free not to. I am free to buy an evening newspaper and I am free not to. Thus an individual can refrain or forbear when the possibility of some action arises. In such case his stance may be simply forbearance in the form of inaction. When a man

sense of doing something different or of forbearing altogether. [*Cf. pp. 151-52.*]

This situation makes possible an analysis that I believe is most significant for the question of freedom of choice. Professor Arthur Danto of Columbia University has outlined the argument in a subtly reasoned essay, "Freedom and Forbearance." [Lehrer (ed.) *op. cit.*, pp. 45-63.]

Professor Danto follows through with the implications involved when a man possesses the power both to do an action *a* and

to refrain from doing it. He writes:

“We are asking now whether it could be under conditions such that he could not do other than forbear doing a and still have full power with regard to a . We are asking whether, under those conditions, he is unable to do a , while yet forbearing from doing a , and still not in the situation of having only partial control. I would like to say that these conditions cannot jointly hold, that forbearance under the

condition of full power with regard to a is incompatible with that forbearance being determined.

“For if I am determined to forbear, and cannot do otherwise, then, in just the sense in which the determinist requires, I am unable to do a. But it seems perfectly plain that, when a man is unable to do a, his not doing a is never a matter of his forbearance. Robinson Crusoe may have been capable of fathering thousands, but a necessary condition was lacking in his island home for him to

exercise that power. So we do not and cannot say that he then forbore from fathering children. . . .

“If there are forbearances, determinism is wrong. It says that we cannot do other than what we in fact do, and if we are unable to do other than what we in fact do, we cannot forbear. .

. . . That there are forbearances, I think, each of us knows well enough. Unless we are incontinent, we forbear frequently, and our language testifies to this recognized fact.” ”

[Ibid., pp. 62-63.]

language of determinism. The determinist might reply: "All right, there is no such thing as forbearance! So what?" This is not a good answer, since no philosophy can be sound or convincing if it denies the reality of everyday human experience.

In the realm of ethics nothing is more significant than forbearance; it is the main import of all virtues that are expressed in negative language. Eight of the Ten Commandments are in this form, such as: "Thou shalt not steal," "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou

shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.” Human virtues can of course be expressed in a positive form, but generally accepted principles and ideals of ethical conduct would have to be revised almost beyond recognition if true forbearance were impossible, as the determinist position implies.

Thus the determinist dispensation plays havoc with traditional concepts not only of regret and forbearance, but also of praise and blame, altruism and selfishness, bravery

unreasonable derogations of character. True enough, such judgments are often mistaken, but it does not follow that they are never justified or that they refer to nothing real in human conduct.

Speaking of social determinism, Sir Isaiah Berlin states that

“ . . . it may, indeed, be a true doctrine. But if it is true, and if we begin to take it seriously, then, indeed, the changes in our language, our moral notions, our attitudes

toward one another, our views of history, of society and of everything else will be too profound to be even adumbrated. ... If social and psychological determinism were established as an accepted truth, our world would be transformed far more radically than was the teleological world of the classical and middle ages by the triumphs of mechanistic principles or those of natural selection. Our words—our modes of speech and thought—would be transformed in

literally unimaginable ways; the notions of choice, of voluntary action, of responsibility, freedom, are so deeply imbedded in our outlook, that our new life, as creatures in a world genuinely lacking these concepts, can, I should maintain, literally not be conceived by us. . . . As for the attempt to ‘reinterpret’ these notions so as to bring them into conformity with determinism, this can be achieved only at the cost of altering their meanings beyond applicability to our normal experience.”

of freedom of choice.

6.3. Regret, Crime and Insanity

While free choice is usually associated with ethical behavior, Professor Demos rightly states that

“freedom is not revealed in moral experience alone, but is in fact prior to it. A man may conceivably have no sense of right or wrong; he may be deciding what to do in complete oblivion of what he ought to do. He may nevertheless be aware while so deciding that he is

free, for the decision to recognize moral standards or the decision to discard or ignore them is itself a free choice.”

[Demos, op. cit., p. 590.]

Furthermore, men frequently make rather unimportant choices in which no real question of ethical conduct arises. A moral issue is involved only when from a *social* viewpoint one alternative is better than another, is more conducive to the welfare of the group and is

“The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.”

[Rom. 7: 19.]

If an individual later looks back upon some action and finds it repugnant, he is likely to reflect, “I could have chosen and done differently, but did not.” This is why remorse can be so poignant and the pangs of conscience so acute.

There has been a continuing debate over the precise meaning of “I could have done otherwise.”

Determinists Moritz Schlick and Professor Patrick Nowell-Smith, of the University of Kent, are typical of those who contend that the locution merely means that I could have acted otherwise if I had so chosen, but that then I would have been a differently constituted person. This interpretation seems to amount to a truism:

“If I had chosen differently, then I could have chosen differently.” However, true freedom of choice implies

that I, possessing the self-same character and intellect, could have acted otherwise because (not if) I had the power to choose otherwise under the identical circumstances at the time of the choice. In short, supposing that I was confronted with three genuine alternatives, I was free to select any one of them up till the very moment I made a final decision.

In general, those who believe in free choice hold that a man does not have moral responsibility for his

choices and acts, unless he could have chosen and have acted otherwise in the way I have just described. Professors Schlick and Nowell-Smith, on the other hand, think that a man is morally responsible “only to the degree that rewards and punishments can alter his future conduct. It makes no difference in their view whether the individual could have chosen to act otherwise at the time. The critical point is whether he can, in the future, be made to act otherwise or even to choose otherwise. If so,

then he should be held responsible for his present action, i.e., he should be subject to praise or blame, reward or punishment.”

[Adler, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 314.]

In his essay “Is ‘Free Will’ a Pseudo-Problem?” Charles A. Campbell, Professor Emeritus at the University of Glasgow, makes a good point in answering Professor Schlick:

“We do not ordinarily consider the lower animals

to be morally responsible. But ought we not to do so if Schlick is right about what we mean by moral responsibility? It is quite possible, by punishing the dog who absconds with the succulent chops designed for its master's luncheon, favorably to influence its motives in respect of its future behavior in like circumstances. If moral responsibility is to be linked with punishment as Schlick links it, and punishment conceived as a form of education, we should surely hold the dog

morally responsible. The plain fact, of course, is that we don't. We don't, because we suppose that the dog 'couldn't help it': that its action (unlike what we usually believe to be true of human beings) was simply a link in a continuous chain of causes and effects. . . ."

[C. A. Campbell, In Defence of Free Will, With Other Philosophical Essays (London: Allen & Unwin, 1967), p. 23.]

As William James points

out, the determinist thesis makes mishmash out of feelings of regret. Yet, as he states,

“Hardly an hour passes in which we do not wish that something might be otherwise; and happy indeed are those of us whose hearts have never echoed the wish of Omar Khayyam

That we might clasp, ere
closed, the book of fate.
And make the writer on a
fairer leaf
Inscribe our names, or

quite obliterate.”

*[James, op. cit., pp.
159-60.]*

James goes on to say:

“When murders and treacheries cease to be sins, regrets are theoretic absurdities and errors. . . . And what sense can there be in condemning ourselves for taking the wrong way, unless we need have done nothing of the sort, unless the right way was open to us as well? I cannot understand the willingness to act, no matter

how we feel, without the belief that acts are really good and bad. I cannot understand the belief that an act is bad, without regret at its happening. I cannot understand regret without the admission of real, genuine possibilities in the world. Only then is it other than a mockery to feel, after we have failed to do our best, that an irreparable opportunity is gone from the universe, the loss of which it must forever after mourn.”

[Ibid., pp. 163,175-76.]

Taking a gruesome wife-killing as his case in point, James shows that determinism implies a pessimistic view of the world:

“The judgment of regret calls the murder bad. Calling a thing bad means, if it means anything at all, that the thing ought not to be, that something else ought to be in its stead. Determinism, in denying that anything else can be in its stead, virtually defines the universe as a place in which what ought to be is

impossible,—in other words, as an organism whose constitution is afflicted with an incurable taint, an irremediable flaw.”

[Ibid., pp. 161-62.]

[Cf. Thomas Hardy, p. 27.]

In the field of criminal law Clarence Darrow (1857-1938), renowned American attorney, successfully utilized the philosophy of determinism in which he sincerely believed. Repeatedly he defended men charged with murder or robbery in the courts on

the grounds that since their every thought and action was predetermined, they could not rightly be held morally accountable for their crimes. By this argument he not infrequently obtained acquittals, or sentences less severe than were to be expected.

In his final plea to the court in the famous murder case of Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb in 1924, Darrow read in full a poem, "The Culprit," by a noted determinist, A. E. Housman. In it a young man soliloquizes on the eve

of his hanging:

The night my father got me
His mind was not on me;
He did not plague his fancy
To muse if I should be
The son you see.

The day my mother bore
me
She was a fool and glad.
For all the pain I cost her,
That she had borne the lad
That borne she had.

My mother and my father
Out of the light they lie;
The warrant could not find

them,
And here 'tis only I
Shall hang so high.

Oh let not man remember
The soul that God forgot,
But fetch the county
kerchief
And noose me in the knot.
And I will rot.

For so the game is ended
That should not have
begun.

My father and my mother
They had a likely son,
And I have none.

*[A. E. Housman, Last
Poems (New York: Holt,*

1934), pp. 33-34.]

After reciting Housman's poem, Darrow declared:

“No one knows what will be the fate of the child he gets or the child she bears; the fate of the child is the last thing they consider. This weary old world goes on, begetting, with birth and with living and with death; and all of it is blind from the beginning to the end. I do not know what it was that made these boys do this mad act, but I do know there is a reason for it. I

know they did not beget themselves. I know that any one of an infinite number of causes reaching back to the beginning might be working out in these boys' minds, whom you are asked to hang in malice and in hatred and injustice, because someone in the past has sinned against them."

[Plea of Clarence Darrow in Defense of Richard Loeb and Nathan Leopold Jr. on Trial for Murder (Chicago: Ralph Fletcher Seymour,

1924), pp. 29-30.]

[Loeb was killed in 1936 by a prison inmate; Leopold was paroled in 1958 and unconditionally freed in 1963.]

In 1966 Judge David I. Bazelon of the United States Court of Appeals in Washington, D. C., stated in an address before the New York Civil Liberties Union:

“From my sixteen years’ experience on the bench, I would say that almost all

the perpetrators [of street crimes of violence] come from the bottom of the socio-economic cultural barrel — from among the ignorant, the unemployed and often unemployable. Because they are often deprived of what we call a moral upbringing, our code has little meaning for them. And they have little incentive to observe it since they are virtually excluded from the advantages of our economic and political life. Crime is just one of a cluster of social ills— family breakdowns, mental

disorders, unsupervised youths, school dropouts, alcoholism, and drug addiction—which beset this group.”

[David L. Bazelon, Civil Liberties in New York (New York: New York Civil Liberties Union, April 1966), p. 5.]

I accept Judge Bazelon’s analysis of the situation, but must point out that only a small minority of the underprivileged group commit crime and that many members of that group in American cities

been convicted of robbery. "Why," my friend said, "you *have* to be a determinist when you are in this sort of work. If I had been brought up like young Jones, I would certainly have become a robber, too." This statement I consider to be distressing nonsense. It represents the same attitude as that of Clarence Darrow and can be described as *sentimental determinism* motivated by sincere, if exaggerated, sympathy for the underdogs in society.

The laws of the United

desire to continue their habit that they will murder or rob to obtain money for the purchase of heroin or marijuana.

In Anglo-American law, if a defendant is deemed insane and therefore not responsible for the criminal choices he has made, he may be excused from standing trial or acquitted if his trial takes place. For more than a century criminal law in England and the United States has followed the M'Naughton Rule of 1843. This rule takes its name from Daniel M'Naughton, a paranoiac

who suffered from a persecution complex and thought that Britain's Tory Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, was his chief persecutor. He went to London planning to assassinate Peel as the Tory leader drove by in his carriage. However, on the fatal day the Prime Minister decided to ride in Queen Victoria's coach because she was absent from the city, while his private secretary, Edward Drummond, rode in Peel's carriage. With astonishing ease, M'Naughton shot and killed Drummond.

At his trial the assassin was found not guilty because of impressive medical evidence that he was insane. After his acquittal, M'Naughton was sent to an insane asylum for the rest of his life. In its decision in March 1843 the court declared that

"to establish a defense on the ground of insanity, it must be clearly proved that, at the time of the committing of the act, the party accused was laboring under such a defect of reason, from disease of the

mind, as not to know the nature and quality of the act he was doing, or, if he did know it, that he did not know he was doing what was wrong.”

[Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences (New York: Macmillan, 1932), IV, Vol. Eight, p. 65.]

During the past few decades judges, lawyers and criminologists have become increasingly dissatisfied with the M’Naughton Rule as a guideline for determining mental competence. In

1966 a United States Court of Appeals in New York City adopted a new test in the case of Charles Freeman, a peddler of heroin. The court stated:

“A person is not responsible for criminal conduct if at the time of such conduct as a result of mental disease or defect he lacks substantial capacity either to appreciate the wrongfulness of his conduct or to conform his conduct to the requirements of law.”

[The New York Times, March 1, 1966, p. 1.]

This rule, the court added,

". . . reflects awareness that from the perspective of psychiatry absolutes are ephemeral and gradations inevitable. By employing the telling word 'substantial' to modify 'incapacity,' the rule emphasizes that 'any' incapacity is not sufficient to justify avoidance of criminal responsibility but that 'total' incapacity is also unnecessary."

[Ibid., p. 21.]

particularly helpful in borderline cases, but many crimes are committed in which the coroner, sheriff or district attorney is able without much difficulty to identify the guilty party as mentally ill. The following tragic story from *The New York Times* of May 28, 1966, illustrates this point:

“Warren, Ohio, May 27 (upi)—A schizophrenic steelworker, whose mental disturbances kept him chronically out of work, went berserk early today and killed his wife, four

children and himself. Michael Collins, a 31 year-old mental patient diagnosed as a 'paranoid schizophrenic,' fired 23 shots in his small frame home on the outskirts of town. Fourteen of them hit his family, killing his wife, Minnie, 28, and the children, David, 7; Andy, 6; Silas, 4, and Viola, 3. Coroner Joseph Sudimak said Collins stabbed and clubbed his wife before shooting her, then shot his children, set a fire in the attic and turned the rapid-firing .22-caliber

bolt-action rifle on himself.”

However, by far the greater proportion of criminals in the modern world are not mentally ill. And the extent of crime in the U.S.A. and other nations cogently illustrates the terrible misuse of freedom of choice. In the United States in 1964 there were 9,250 murders, with an average of one every hour; while during the same year more than 184,000 physical assaults with intent to kill or commit serious injury took

place. Crimes of violence are very often crimes of passion in which a man gives way to anger, jealousy or some other strong emotion.

My discussion of crime is most pertinent because it throws the spotlight of implication on the determinist thesis. I earlier cited the “irresistible impulse” test in criminal law.

“On the determinist theory of action, every impulse from which a man does in fact act is irresistible.”

but the ethically good are moved by irresistible impulse. Thus a man of affectionate disposition has an irresistible impulse to be kind to his children and his mother-in-law; a public-spirited citizen has an irresistible impulse to expose the graft at City Hall; George Washington had an irresistible impulse to tell the truth after he cut down the cherry tree.

A variation on the “irresistible impulse” theme is to look at human choice from the viewpoint of hypnosis. If a man is hypnotized to perform a

impartiality hardened criminals and persons who have a long record of altruistic service to their fellow men. Thus, all thieves are really kleptomaniacs, born with an overpowering tendency to steal; and confessed murderers should be sent to the psychiatrist's couch and a rest home in the country rather than to jail.

6.4. Walden Two

In his popular novel *Walden Two*, Dr. B. F. Skinner, Professor of

studied at graduate school, outlines the methods and aims of the new Walden;

“Well, what do you say to the design of personalities? Would that interest you? The control of temperament? Give me the specifications, and I’ll give you the man! What do you say to the control of motivation, building the interests which will make men most productive and most successful? Does that seem to you fantastic? Yet some of the techniques are available, and more can be

worked out experimentally. Think of the possibilities! A society in which there is no failure, no boredom, no duplication of effort! ... Let us control the lives of our children and see what we can make of them. . . .

[B. F. Skinner, Walden Two (New York: Macmillan Paperbacks, 1962), p. 292.]

“Now that we know how positive reinforcement works, and why negative doesn’t, we can be more deliberate and hence more successful, in our cultural

design. We can achieve a sort of control under which the controlled, though they are following a code much more scrupulously than was ever the case under the old system, nevertheless feel free. They are doing what they want to do, not what they are forced to do. That's the source of the tremendous power of positive reinforcement—there's no restraint and no revolt. By a careful cultural design, we control not the final behavior, but the inclination to behave—the motives, the desires, the

wishes. The curious thing is that in that case *the question of freedom never arises.*"

[*Ibid.*, p. 262.]

As to free choice, Frazier says flatly:

“I deny that freedom exists at all. I must deny it—or my program would be absurd. You can’t have a science about a subject matter which hops capriciously about. Perhaps we can never prove that man isn’t free; it’s an assumption. But the increasing success of a

science of behavior makes it more and more plausible.”

[Ibid., p. 257.]

Speaking for himself directly, Professor Skinner comments in the same vein:

“The hypothesis that man is not free is essential to the application of scientific method to the study of human behavior. The free inner man who is held responsible for the behavior of the external biological organism is only

a prescientific substitute for the kinds of causes which are discovered in the course of a scientific analysis. All these alternative causes lie outside the individual.”

[B. F. Skinner, Science and Human Behavior (New York: Macmillan, 1953), pp. 447-48.]

Skinner’s approach is reminiscent of the behaviorist psychology propounded by Dr. John B. Watson in his well-known book, *Psychology, from the Standpoint of a*

Person, Professor Rogers goes far in refuting Skinner's views. Rogers objects to the sort of world

“which Skinner explicitly (and many other scientists implicitly) expect and hope for in the future. To me this kind of world would destroy the human person as I have come to know him in the deepest moments of psychotherapy. In such moments I am in relationship with a person who is spontaneous, who is responsibly free, that is, aware of this freedom to

choose who he will be, and aware also of the consequences of his choice. To believe, as Skinner holds, that all this is an illusion, and that spontaneity, freedom, responsibility, and choice have no real existence, would be impossible for me.”

[Rogers, On Becoming a Person, op. cit., p. 391.]

Rogers shows that Skinner runs into serious self-contradiction when he decides that the inhabitants

of his projected Utopia are to be informed, skillful, well-behaved and productive. For this is a personal and subjective choice on his part.

"He might have chosen to make men submissive, dependent, and gregarious, for example. Yet by his own statement in another context man's 'capacity to choose,' his freedom to select his course and to initiate action—these powers do not exist in the scientific picture of man."

[Ibid., p. 392.]

Generalizing from Rogers' analysis, we see that in a dictatorship, whether benevolent or malevolent, the one-man ruler or the Executive Council that runs the country is required constantly to make important choices. Unless we postulate a supernatural, all-determining Deity, there is nobody above the dictator and the Executive Council to give orders. There is nobody, if I may coin a word, to *determinize* the determiners. We must conclude that if freedom of

“The man himself does not know what the inner clockwork is; he is like the hands on the clock, thinking they move freely over the face of the clock.”

[John Hospers, “Free Will and Psychoanalysis,” in Edwards and Pap (eds.) op. cit., p. 78.]

And Professor Hospers goes so far as to say:

“To be sure, the domination by the unconscious in the case of ‘normal’ individuals is

somewhat more benevolent than the tyranny and despotism exercised in neurotic cases, and therefore the former have evoked less comment; but the principle remains in all cases the same: the unconscious is the master of every fate and the captain of every soul.”

[Ibid., p. 82.]

I cannot accept this extreme position. Subconscious stimuli play a part in everyone's life, but I deny that they dominate human behavior except in

to this book, there is justified doubt as to how much he agreed with the volume as a whole.]

and William C. Bullitt. The authors admit that President Wilson in his youth had an excellent relation with his father, whom he greatly admired. Hence Freud and Bullitt argue that Wilson's normal Oedipus complex was suppressed and had to find an outlet in various "surrogates" whom Wilson hated, such as Senator Henry Cabot Lodge and the French statesman,

7: Summary and Conclusion

In this book I have presented what to me are the most telling arguments for the objective existence of freedom of choice and the non-existence of universal, all-governing determinism. Ten main points stand out:

First, there is the strong, immediate, common-sense intuition in practically all human beings that we possess true freedom when choosing between real

data from science and by potent reasoning from philosophy.

Second, since human choice is always limited and conditioned by the past and by present circumstances, there can be no such thing as *absolute* freedom of choice. But there can be and is *relative* free choice co-existing with relative determinism. Determinism in the form of if-then causal sequences governs much of the human body's functioning and much of external Nature. Man utilizes free choice to

further his well-being by taking advantage of established scientific laws and machines embodying determinism.

Third, the existence of chance or contingency as an ultimate trait of Nature negates the thesis of a total and exclusive determinism or necessity operating throughout the cosmos and human life. Contingency is readily seen in the unique intersection of mutually independent event-streams between which there was previously no causal connection. All natural

laws take the form of if-then sequences or relations. The *if* factor is obviously conditional and demonstrates the continual co-existence of contingency with necessity. In fact, contingency and necessity are correlatives, and both rank as metaphysical ultimates. Furthermore, scientific theories of probability imply the existence of contingency.

Fourth, potentiality is another cosmic ultimate that undermines the determinist position. Potentiality looks toward

mediated through free choice can have its appropriate effect in the actualization of any one of a number of relevant possibilities. In my next point I give a concrete example of the way this happens.

Fifth, the normal processes of human thought tend to show that freedom of choice is real. Thinking usually goes on in terms of general conceptions or universals under which a number of varying particulars can be subsumed. An individual

who has the general idea of “vacation travel” is likely to consider several places to which he may go. These different places constitute genuine alternatives or potentialities from which he can freely choose. Thus, a man who is deliberating in order to solve a problem relies upon both universals and potentiality, both of which point towards free choice.

Sixth, the fact that only the present exists and that it is always some present activity or force which produces the past,

Seventh, freedom of choice takes place when a man, in his role as agent cause, deliberates among open alternatives made possible by contingency and potentiality, and reaches a definite decision to do this or that. Of course, he may decide to refrain from *any* action in a particular situation.

Eighth, words such as *refraining*, *forbearance*, *self-restraint* and *regret* lose their normal meaning in the novel dialect of determinism. If determinism proves to be

true, we shall have to scrap much in the existing dictionaries of the world and do a great deal of re-defining.

Ninth, from the viewpoint of ethics, law and criminal law it is difficult to understand how without freedom of choice the average man would have a sufficient sense of personal responsibility for the development of adequate moral standards, or how he could be held guilty of wrongdoing.

Tenth, the doctrine of

determinism imply the *inevitability* of every human decision. I cannot think that a man holding such a belief will exercise as much initiative and effort as an adherent of free choice. The more conscious a human being is of that portentous freedom, the better his morale will probably be and the more effective he probably will become.

“The ‘free-willer’ tends to be aggressive in his relation to the world, treats it as something to be

comprehended,
manipulated and
dominated. His opposite
number tends rather to
accept the world and
events as they come.”

*[Allan M. Munn, Free
Will and Determinism
(Toronto: University of
Toronto Press, 1960), p.
214.]*

Significant evidence as to
the creative role played by
an awareness of freedom of
choice comes from the field
of psychotherapy.
Professor Rogers declares:

“I would be at a loss to explain the positive change which can occur in psychotherapy if I had to omit the importance of the sense of free and responsible choice on the part of my clients. I believe that this experience of freedom to choose is one of the deepest elements underlying change. ... It is the burden of being responsible for the self one chooses to be. It is the recognition of a person that he is an emerging process, not a static end product.”

[Rogers, “Freedom and

Commitment,” loc. cit., pp. 6-7.]

Speaking of the meaning of a psychological study of delinquents, Professor Rogers continues:

“I began to see the significance of inner autonomy. The individual who sees himself and his situation clearly and who freely takes responsibility for that self and for that situation is a very different person from the one who is simply in the grip of outside circumstances. ... It is clear

to me that in therapy . . . commitment to purpose and to meaning in life is one of the significant elements of change. It is only when the person decides, 'I am someone; I am someone worth being; I am committed to being myself,' that change becomes possible. . . .

“So I am emboldened to say that over against this view of man as unfree, as an object, is the evidence from therapy, from subjective living, and from objective research as well, that personal freedom and

responsibility have a crucial significance, that one cannot live a complete life without such personal freedom and responsibility, and that self-understanding and responsible choice make a sharp and measurable difference in the behavior of the individual."

[Ibid., pp. 9,11.]

I am able to verify personally Professor Rogers' remarks. For, as I have discovered through my own inner experience, full awareness of freedom

doctrine. Jean-Paul Sartre is right when he avers:

**“We are not free to cease
being free.”**

*[Jean-Paul Sartre,
Being and Nothingness
(New York: Washington
Square Press, 1966), p.
537.]*

He is right, because freedom of choice is an inborn, indigenous, ineradicable characteristic of human beings.

Joseph Wood Krutch outlines the over-all social consequences of the vogue

of determinism:

“Educators, sociologists, and lawmakers have begun to act as though man were absolutely incapable of choice, of self-determination, or of any autonomous activity. . . . Moreover and merely by being treated as though he could do nothing for himself man is, perhaps, actually becoming less capable of doing so. Any society which not merely tells its members that they are automata but also treats them as though they were,

runs the risk of becoming a society in which human capacities atrophy because they are less and less rewarded, or even tolerated, as well as less and less acknowledged. As the individual becomes, either in theory or in fact, less capable of doing anything for himself the question what may be done to him inevitably comes to seem more and more interesting.”

[Krutch, op. cit., p. 40.]

If the position I have presented in this book is

Guide to Meanings

AGENT

An initiating cause or stimulus, either human or nonhuman, that acts upon relatively passive substance or subject matter. An agent can itself become subject matter for some other agent.

CHANCE

Synonym for *contingency*.

CONTINGENCY

A cosmic ultimate that is the opposite or correlative of determinism or

necessity; an event that either may or may not be; more precisely, the causal intersection of two or more mutually independent and previously unrelated causal series.

COSMIC ULTIMATE

A fundamental trait of the universe as a whole, of existence as such, that is common to every event and object throughout the cosmos.

DETERMINISM

A cosmic ultimate that is the opposite and correlative of contingency,

and consisting of the if-then sequences, relations or laws that exist in Nature. *Total* determinism means that such laws are all-governing throughout the universe and human life; *relative* determinism means that such laws function side by side with contingency and freedom of choice.

DETERMINIST

A person who believes in total and universal determinism.

FREEDOM OF CHOICE

The human capacity to

choose freely between two or more genuine alternatives or possibilities, such choosing being always limited both by the past and by the circumstances of the immediate present.

FREE WILL

See *freedom of choice*.

HUMANISM

A comprehensive and integrated philosophy or way of life that, rejecting any belief in the supernatural, relies on reason, science and democracy in striving for the happiness, freedom and

progress of all mankind.

LAW

An if-then, cause-effect sequence or if-then relation existing in Nature or in man-made machines or other devices. Such laws constitute the realm of determinism or necessity.

LIBERTARIAN

A person who believes in the existence of freedom of choice or free will.

METAPHYSICAL ULTIMATE

Synonym for *cosmic ultimate*.

METAPHYSICS

The branch of philosophy that searches out and defines the cosmic or metaphysical ultimates.

NECESSITARIAN

A person who believes that necessity rules throughout all space and time; synonym for determinist.

NECESSITY

Synonym for *determinism*.

PLURALISM

The theory that the universe is basically not a one, but a many that stems

from diverse modes of being, various centers of action and multiple causes.

POTENTIALITY

A cosmic or metaphysical ultimate, meaning that every event or object in the universe has plural possibilities of action, interaction, change and development.

PREDESTINATION

Theological or Christian determinism with the accent on an omnipotent and omniscient God who preordains everything that happens, so that human

individuals are predestined by Him to heaven or hell in the life after death.

SUBJECT MATTER

In the context of this book, a substance that is relatively passive and acted upon by the dynamic agent, human or non-human, in the form of efficacious cause.

UNIVERSALS

The general ideas or abstractions that are central to the process of thinking, and under which can be classified many different particulars.

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Index

- Acadia National Park, 103
- Adler, Mortimer J., 10
- Agent, 181 and *passim*
- Ahab, 24-25
- Alexander the Great, 76
- Alice in Wonderland*
(Carroll), 77
- America, American (s)
- America's, 16, 20, 54, 69,
71, 73, 83, 135
- American psychology,
53-54
- See also* United States
- American Revolution, 73,
172
- Anglo-American
- Landing in Sicily, 77 Law,

Aurelius

Automobiles, 69-70,
128-129, 135

Auschwitz, 112

Babic, Ivan, 192

Baffin Bay, 71

Baptist Church, Baptists, 21

Also see Free Will Baptists

Bazelon, Judge David I.,
156-57

Beebe, Helen, 64

Behaviorist psychology, 45,
165

Berenson, Bernhard, 75

Bergson, Henri, 57,120

Berlin, Sir Isaiah, 10, 28,
75- 78,149

Berofsky, Bernard, 96

Beyond Humanism (Harts
home), 90

passim

“Convergence of the Twain:
Lines on the Loss of the
Titanic, The” (Hardy),
67-68

CORE (Congress for Racial
Equality), 140

Cornwallis, Lord Charles,
73—74

Cosmic ultimate, 182 and
pas-

Criminal law, 159,172

Cromwell, Oliver, 76

Crusoe, Robinson, 147-48

“Culprit, The” (Housman),
155-56

Damascus, 142

Deduction, 51-53,138

Dante Alighieri, 34

Danto, Arthur, 146-47

Darrow, Clarence, 155-56, 158

Democritus, 13-14, 56

Demos, Raphael, 119, 151

Descartes, Rene, 53

Determinism, determinist, 182 and *passim*

Also see Economic determinism

Also see Theological determinism

Dewey, John, 52, 57, 84-86, 88, 105-106, 130, 135-36, 143

Dialogues (Plato), 109

Diatribes or Sermon Concerning Free Will, A (Erasmus), 19

Divine Comedy, The (Dante), 34

“Doctrine of Necessity Re-
Examined, The” (Capek),
10,52

Dodd, Damon C., 188

Dostoievsky, Feodor
Mikhailovich, 29,113

Drummond, Edward, 159

Dunham, Barrows, 137

Dynasts, The (Hardy), 27

Economic determinism,
40, 78- 84

Economics, 31, 50, 79-84,
111, 157

Edmund, 25-26

Education, 17, 31-32, 54,
114, 153,158

Edwards, Jonathan, 20-21

Einstein, Albert, 54-55, 56,
58

Encyclopedists, 40,44

Existentialism, 16
Farrer, Austin, 143-44
Fatalism, 17, 42, 87, 91, 176
Fate and Freedom (Frank),
114-15
Federal Aviation Agency,
65
First Cause, 91, 136
Fisher, H. A. L., 74
Fitzgerald, Edward, 26-27
Fors Fortuna, 57
France, 69
French, 31, 44, 73
French Revolution, 73
France, Anatole, 23—24
See also Dr. Socrates, M.
Chevalier
Franciscan, 22
Franco American forces, 74
Frank, Jerome, 115-16

(Danto), 146

Freedom of choice, 182 and

Freedom of Choice

Affirmed (Lamont), 10

Freedom of Will

(Edwards), 20

Freeman, Charles, 160

Freud, Sigmund, 168

Freudian theory, 167-68

and Marxist theories, 83-

81

Oedipus complex, 167-68

Fridianna, 148

Fromm, Erich, 29-30

Garner, John Nance, 72

Geiger counter, 93

Genghis Khan, 77

Gettysburg, Battle of, 73

Ginsberg, Morris, 116-17

God, 20-22, 34, 38, 91, 136,

166,176 Acts of, 92
Gracie, Archibald, 191
Grand Inquisitor, 29
Great White Whale, 24
Greece, 13
Greek, 56,89,134,144
Greenland, 71
Gruen, William, 189
Habit, 33, 104-06, 135, 142,
150-51,159
Handlin, Oscar, 73
Hardy, Thomas, 27, 67-68,
155
Harlow, Harrington, 192
Hartshorne, Charles, 10,
52-53, 90,106-08,131-32
Harvard Divinity School,
127
Hegel, Georg Wilhelm
Friedrich, 56, 76

“Is ‘Free Will’ a
Pseudo-Problem?”
(Campbell), 153
Jackson, Stonewall, 73
James, William, 15-16, 18,
57, 87-88, 127-28, 141,
153-55
Jesus, 29 Job, 91
John, King of England, 78
Johnson, Samuel, 38
Joseph, H. W. B., 59
Julius Caesar
(Shakespeare), 25
Juniper, Brother, 22—23
Kallen, Horace M., 39, 48
Kant, Immanuel, 119, 152
Khrushchev, Nikita, 81
King Lear (Shakespeare),
25- 26
Kismet, 19

Marxist(s), 79,81,83 and
Freudian theories, 83-84
and non-Marxists, 82
Masefield, John, 28
Masters, Edgar Lee, 34-35
Melville, Herman, 24-25
Mechanism (s), 17,48-49
Medicine, 47-48
Memorial Day, 135
Metaphysics, 183 and
passim Metaphysical
Ultimate, 183 and *passim*
Metaphysics of
Naturalism, The
(Lamprecht), 10,107
Methodist, 21
Mill, John Stuart, 18,119
M'Naughton Rule,
M'Naughton, Daniel,
159-60

North Atlantic, 65, 71
Notre Dame Cathedral, 69,
71
Nowell-Smith, Patrick,
152-53
Nuclear power, 49 War, 82
Oedipus complex, 167-68
Oedipus Rex (Sophocles),
22
Ockham's Razor, 95
Omar Khayyam, 154
See also Rubaiyat
On Becoming a Person
(Rogers), 165
“On Fate” (Cicero), 17-18
On the Nature of Things
(Lucretius) , 14-15
*Open Society and Its
Enemies, The* (Popper), 78
Oriental countries, 25

Poincare, Raymond, 168
Poor Richard's Almanac
(Franklin), 74
Popper, Karl R., 78
Potentiality, 184 and
passim
Predestination, 19-21, 184
Prickett's cow, 34
Principle of uncertainty,
92-93
Probability, probabalism,
50- 51, 94, 133, 135, 170
Protestant, 91
Protestant Reformation, 19,
21
See also Baptists, Free Will
Baptists, Free Will Baptist
Church, Methodist,
Calvinist, Lutheran
Prussians, 73

Psychiatry, psychiatrists,
31—32.120.160.166-67

Psychoanalysis,
psychoanalysts,
31.120.166-67

Psychology, 31,53-54,163

*Psychology, from the
Standpoint of a Behaviorist*
(Watson), 165

Psychotherapy, 118,174

Pythagoras, 13

Randall, John H., Jr.,
59-60, 70,131

Reductive fallacy, 95-96

Regret, 38, 149, 151, 153-54

Reid, Thomas, 134

Religion, 18, 30,40,56,176

Renaissance, 19

Renouvier, Charles B., 86

Rey-Herme, Denise, 69

“Roger Heston” (Masters),
34- 35

Rogers, Carl A., 54, 118-19,
165-67,174-75

Roman, 57

Roman Catholic Church, 21
Councils, 21

Roosevelt, Franklin D., 72,
83

Rubaiyat of Omar
Khayyam, The
(Fitzgerald), 26-27, 154

Russell, Bertrand, 56

Russian Revolution, 81

Sartre, Jean-Paul, 16.175

Schlick, Moritz, 18,152-53

Schiller, F. C. S., 120,130

Schiller, Frederick, 76

Science, 84, 87, 116, 118-19,
135-36, 163-64, 169-70

173

Self as Agent, The

(Macmurray), 138

Sellars, Wilfrid, 141

Shakespeare, William,

25-26

Shubow, Leo, 191

Sidgwick, Henry, 3B-39

Skinner, B. F., 163-67

Skinner-Rogers

controversy, 165-67

Smith, Captain Edward J.,

70

Sociology, sociologists, 31,

54, 135, 175

Socrates, 52, 109-10

pre-Socratic, 13

Socrates, Dr., 23-24 *See also*

Anatole France Sophocles,

22

Soviet Union, 81

Spanish Inquisition, 29

Spinoza, Benedict, 39-40,
53, 54, 56, 114, 173

Spoon River Anthology
(Masters), 34-35

Sports, 111

Stael, Madame de, 189

Stalin, Joseph V., 77

Starkenburg, Hans, 80

Stoics, 53

Stubbs, William, 78

Subject matter, 184 and
passim

“Superstition of Necessity,
The” (Dewey), 52

System of Nature
(d'Holbach), 76

Tam worth, N. H., 68

Weiss, Paul, 117-18, 121
What Is History? (Carr),
77-78
White Star liner, 65
Whitehead, Alfred N., 103
Wilder, Thornton, 22-23
Williams, Gardner, 67, 114
Wilson, Woodrow, 168
Wolf, Abraham, 116
Woodbridge, Frederick J.
E., 70, 100-01, 124-25,
137-38
Woolridge, Dean E., 58
World War II, 16, 64
Yorktown, 73
York River, 73
Zangara, Joseph, 72
Zavalloni, Roberto, 194